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ABSTRACT

The ongoing planning of school improvement in the Chicago Public Schools is examined in this paper. The Chicago School Reform Act required that principals consult with their local school councils (LSCs), staff, parents, and community members to develop a three-year school improvement plan (SIP). Data were derived from two studies: the first examined LSCs in 14 schools (10 elementary and 4 high schools); and the second investigated participant roles in the SIP process in three of the elementary schools. Methodology involved onsite observations and interviews. The first chapter describes the SIP revision process in 14 schools, followed by a more detailed examination of 3 of the schools. A model of school improvement planning is presented that introduces the ideas of accountability and vision to differentiate some plans and schools from others. The second chapter presents case studies from three elementary schools that made significant revisions in their SIPs during the 1991-92 school year. The final chapter introduces a series of research-based suggestions. Two figures and a publications list are included. (Contains 10 references.) (LMI)

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MONITORING AND RESEARCHING THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL REFORM IN CHICAGO

Vision and Accountability in School Improvement Planning

Susan Leigh Flinspach
Susan P. Ryan
With John Q. Easton and Paula Gil!

October 1992

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INTRODUCTION

Informed, careful planning is an important part of school improvement. The benefits of schoolwide planning include improving communication among school staff, coordinating programs and services between grades as well as across disciplines, and providing a mechanism for evaluating progress towards school goals (Webster, 1985). In their study of urban high schools, Louis and Miles (1990) found that consensus and good planning contribute to greater teaching effectiveness. Both the planning process itself and the initiatives it gives rise to may promote school improvement, especially at schools characterized by widespread and ongoing planning efforts.

In light of such research findings, Chicago school reformers made educational planning one pillar of the reform movement. The Chicago School Reform Act required principals, "...in consultation with the local school council, all categories of school staff, parents and community residents," to develop a three-year school improvement plan (SIP). The law further stipulated that the plans should "...reflect the overriding purpose of the attendance center to improve educational quality," by addressing priority goals that include: increasing achievement; improving attendance and graduation rates; preparing students for further education, employment, and life; and providing a high-quality academic program for all students. The local school councils (LSCs) adopted the three-year SIPs in May, 1990. These original plans vary greatly in structure and they contain what General Superintendent of Schools Ted Kimbrough called a "multitude of initiatives" (Chicago Public Schools, 1990b, p. v). In May, 1992, LSCs completed the third version of their original SIPs.

Louis and Miles (1990) found that good educational planning is "evolutionary," that is, schools revise their plan in response to changes at the school. Generally this involves reviewing the plan's goals and the status and outcomes of its implementation to date, and then amending it accordingly. School planners who periodically revise an improvement plan are in a position to re-prioritize issues and develop new strategies that avoid potential problems (D'Amico, 1988). The Chicago School Reform Act charges the LSCs with the duty of monitoring implementation of the SIPs; councils also approve annual revisions to the plans. A systemwide report on the 1990 SIPs found that "about 90 percent of the elementary and more than 80 percent of the high school improvement plans discuss procedures to check the progress of the plans" (Chicago Public Schools, 1990b, p. 68).

This report discusses the on-going planning of school improvement in Chicago Public Schools. The first chapter contains a description of the SIP revision process in fourteen schools, followed by more discussion of three of the schools. The chapter concludes with a model of school improvement planning that introduces the ideas of accountability and vision to differentiate some plans (and schools) from others. The second chapter contains case studies from three elementary schools that invested significant effort in revising their SIPs during the 1991-92 school year. The final chapter introduces a series of research-based suggestions, which are also reprinted in a separate booklet, Suggestions for School Improvement Planning, available from the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

The information that we report here is based on data from two Chicago Panel studies. The first is our study of local school councils. We have been attending LSC meetings at ten elementary and four high schools (randomly selected for geographic and ethnic characteristics) since the winter of 1990. This summer (1992), we interviewed the principals, the LSC chairpersons, and the professional personnel advisory committee (PPAC) chairpersons at these schools about SIP monitoring and revision. Although some persons were not available, we completed 37 of the possible 42 interviews. We summarize findings from our study of the fourteen schools in this report.

The report also includes information from a second study that focuses specifically on school improvement. The study's goal was to learn more about educational improvements and their relationship to both the Chicago School Reform Act and the roles of the local school council, the principal, the professional personnel advisory committee and teachers in developing, monitoring and implementing changes. We selected four elementary schools based on three criteria: continuity of principal leadership, racial and ethnic diversity, and emergence of new programs. Two of the four schools had new principals and two had experienced principals; the schools had distinct student racial compositions; and all four appeared to have potential for improvement as a result of new initiatives. We collected extensive information from three of the four schools. Several factors (including limits on our own resources) precluded us from completing the work we began in the fourth school.

We followed the involvement of LSCs, principals, and teachers with improvement planning at the three elementary schools during the spring and summer of 1992. This period of data collection gave us a "slice-of-time" perspective of the schools. Although we lack the "deep history" needed for extensive discussion of the school cultures or the longitudinal nature of their planning, we do have in-depth knowledge about how the school communities planned for the 1992-93 school year. Besides attending the LSC meetings at these schools as part of the larger study, we observed 77 teacher meetings at which faculty reviewed, studied, and planned curriculum and/or instruction. We also formally interviewed selected staff members and conducted many informal interviews and observations. We describe school improvement planning at these three case-study schools -- Montgomery, Rivera, and Winkle -- throughout this report.

I. THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

SIP Revision in Fourteen Schools

In this section, we describe 1992 SIP revision in our sample of fourteen schools (ten elementary and four high schools) by summarizing the roles of the principals, teachers, and local school councils in the process. Although most schools attempted to involve non-LSC parents and community members in SIP revision, they had little success. At one school with a long tradition of good parent and community involvement, the principal made a concerted effort to attract non-LSC parents to planning meetings. This school held a series of Saturday morning workshops for parents to explain and discuss the SIP. At most schools, however, few parents attended SIP revision meetings or contributed suggestions.

The Principal's Role

The Reform Act mandates that the school principal develop an SIP in consultation with the LSC, the school staff, parents, and community residents. Nevertheless, the principal still bears full responsibility for creating and implementing the SIP, and will also be held accountable for its outcomes. In 1992, principals in the fourteen schools that we study took three different stances toward revising their SIPs.

In more than half of our schools, the principal took on the role of "manager," facilitating, supervising and coordinating teachers' and others' input. These principals most often established and chaired committees to complete the task of revising the SIP. As manager, the principal scheduled meetings, developed timelines, delegated tasks, collated the final version of the document, and in some instances, arranged to pay teachers for overtime work on the SIPs.

Although many principals acted as managers, three principals delegated SIP revision to other members of the school community. One principal, for instance, described her role in the SIP revision and development process as "passive." This principal simply delegated the task to a committee of teachers and LSC members, although she retained final authority over the SIP contents. This principal felt that the teachers were both fully committed to, and capable of, developing a viable improvement plan for the school. In that school, then, some teachers guided and facilitated the process as principals in other schools did (and as this principal had done in previous years). A second principal also delegated the SIP revision process, in this case to the PPAC, and consulted with them regularly to offer advice and to check on the status of the SIP.

Two of the fourteen principals developed and then revised the SIP virtually on their own, and then presented the revised product to the faculty and LSC for comments. We observed differences among these principals in the amount of input that they solicited and accepted from the rest of the school community. One principal wrote the plan with her own

ideas in mind, but sought extensive input on how to implement them. She worked closely with teachers who helped her apply her abstract ideas and goals to specific programs and activities. Another principal requested suggestions for the SIP from all department chairpersons. He then prioritized these suggestions and incorporated several of them into the plan.

The Teachers' Role

Although the reform legislation holds the principal responsible for writing and revising the school improvement plan, it is to be done "in consultation with teachers... ." The interpretation of this phrase varied among our schools. The teachers' role in revising the SIP at a few schools was limited to reading and commenting on the draft written by the principal. At a few other schools, the teachers revised the entire plan themselves. Teacher involvement in most schools, however, fell somewhere between these two extremes.

At one end of the spectrum are the few schools where teachers had very little involvement with revising the school improvement plan. The initial plan and its subsequent revisions were written by the principal who usually summarized the plan's content at a faculty meeting. The principal may have incorporated some teacher suggestions into the final document. Teachers in these schools had a relatively passive role in SIP revision.

At the other end of the spectrum are those schools where teachers were responsible for revising the plan with little or no involvement from the principal. As noted in the previous section, principals at two schools willingly delegated SIP revision to responsible teachers. The teachers, according to one principal who used this approach, were well organized, knew what they wanted in the plan, established a system that ensured input from all teachers, and continued to meet until the plan was completed. The PPAC chairperson at this school described the time investment as substantial, but also believed that the revised plan would be effectively implemented. At a third school, the principal had been on extended sick leave, so it was up to teachers to initiate and manage SIP revision.

When the principal managed SIP revision, teachers could participate in numerous ways. About half of the schools in our study had a core group of teachers who often worked with the principal on revising the SIP. These teachers either served on an SIP committee established by the principal or were members of the PPAC. They often solicited input from other teachers during their department or grade-level meetings. Teacher representatives brought these suggestions to planning meetings where they were discussed and revised. Although parents and LSC members were often invited to serve on SIP committees, teachers were clearly the most visible group.

In four schools, all teachers became active in the SIP revision process. At one school, for example, every teacher was required sign up for a specific SIP committee such as math, language arts, discipline, etc. Committee meetings were mandatory and, as a result, all teachers participated with at least some aspects of the plan. Another school with

a large faculty divided teachers into grade levels and met weekly to work on individual components of the plan. At two smaller schools, all teachers worked together on the plan during regular faculty meetings.

From our interviews, we have ascertained that teachers, in general, have become progressively more involved in the planning process during the past three years. Several PPAC chairpersons presented an explanation for the increase in teacher participation. When the reform law required schools to submit an improvement plan, teachers were skeptical that SIPs would be more than burdensome paperwork. According to PPAC chairpersons, teachers were unwilling to commit extensive time and energy to devising plans that would never be implemented. This attitude, however, seems to have changed during the third year of reform when many teachers recognized that planned initiatives were in fact being implemented. PPAC chairpersons and principals attribute the increased participation to teachers' growing belief that they can have a say in planning that is backed by adequate funding and principal support.

Three schools that had hired new principals at the end of the 1990-91 school year reported a sharp increase in teacher involvement in SIP revision. PPAC chairpersons credit this to the principals' interest in, and encouragement of, staff involvement in planning. The new principals were willing to listen to staff ideas, accommodate teachers' concerns and integrate their suggestions into the improvement plan. At four other schools, teacher involvement in the planning process also increased. These schools had a very active core group of teacher leaders who took responsibility for involving more staff in the revision process.

The LSC's Role

The LSCs in our sample played one of two roles in SIP revision. Just over half of the LSCs had a formal structure for being involved in SIP revisions, and the remainder did not. We noted three different modes of formal involvement: some councils created SIP committees that included teachers, the principal and LSC members; some appointed LSC representatives to membership in schoolwide SIP committees; and others reserved time at their regular meetings to discuss SIP revisions.

In the remaining schools (just under half), the LSC had no formal mechanism for participation in SIP revision. At most of these schools, the LSC did no more than approve the SIP as presented to them by the principal or by a committee (a school SIP committee or the PPAC). In one or two schools, an individual parent LSC member did attend SIP meetings, but not necessarily as a representative of the LSC.

Even at the schools with a formal structure for plan revision, the LSCs in our study played relatively limited parts in revising the SIPs this year. Several principals and PPAC chairpersons described how they had encouraged LSC participation in revising the SIPs, but they found that LSC members were often satisfied with just approving the completed plan.

In one unfortunate instance, the LSC did not discuss the SIP until the meeting where they were expected to approve it, ignoring earlier requests for input from the PPAC. That LSC then demanded major revisions in the teacher-written plan, which provoked resentment from the faculty.

Although LSCs generally assumed a passive role in SIP revision, they did contribute some suggestions, particularly in the areas of school safety, discipline, and parent and community involvement. LSCs as a whole have not actively engaged in curricular and instructional issues, although individual LSC members voiced suggestions during planning meetings. Minor conflict has occurred in four schools over whether to spend discretionary funds on initiatives supported by the LSC, but not necessarily advocated by school staff. The councils and school staffs were able to resolve these issues after some lengthy discussions. At two other schools – schools where the LSC and principal have a history of disagreements -- the conflicts led to serious controversies and delays in approving the SIP.

SIP Monitoring in Fourteen Schools

According to the reform legislation, the LSC is responsible for monitoring the school improvement plan.[1] In reality, the principal and teachers are more likely to monitor the plan and then report their findings to the local school council. Eight of the fourteen schools monitored their SIPs, although they differed as to how formal the process was. Approximately half of the eight schools monitored the SIP very informally: teachers discussed selected initiatives during staff meetings or the principal reported on specific programs to the local school council. Although these schools reviewed parts of the plans, they did not attempt systematic monitoring of the entire SIP.

Two schools formalized an SIP monitoring and reporting system. The principal or a teacher provided regularly scheduled (monthly or quarterly) updates to the LSCs. One school (Rivera, see Chapter 2) used a self-evaluation instrument to gauge the extent of SIP implementation. Two other schools established SIP monitoring committees. One committee never met; the second committee conducted an end-of-year summative evaluation.

Six of the fourteen schools conducted no discernable monitoring or evaluation of their school improvement plans. Two schools disregarded their SIPs because they felt the contents were not worth monitoring (they had been written by principals no longer at the schools). At a third school, the principal was on extended sick leave, and no one else took over the responsibility for evaluating the plan. In the other three schools, personnel did not explain the absence of monitoring procedures.

Clearly, school personnel differ in how important they perceive the SIP to be and the extent to which they use the SIP as a guiding document. In about one-third of the fourteen schools, the SIPs have had little or nothing to do with daily school life. After the plans were

[1] We use the terms "monitoring" and "evaluation" interchangeably.

revised, they were rarely discussed in the schools. In these schools, many teachers were unaware of the SIP contents (in one school, a new principal could not locate a copy of the plan in 1992). Several conditions operated to diminish the role of the SIP: the principal who wrote the plan left the school; the plan was so unrealistic and unmanageable that teachers rejected it; the plan contained only one or two initiatives that were easily set in place at the beginning of the school year; and the plan contained only perfunctory initiatives that required no teacher involvement.

In another third of the schools, the SIP played a much more vital function in school life. At these schools, teachers regularly discussed the plan at PPAC meetings and were more active in the revision process. New principals (six of the fourteen schools have hired new principals since reform) have often replaced old, ineffective plans with more pragmatic ones. In the remaining third of the schools, SIPs had an intermediate role: teachers discussed them occasionally, but not regularly.

School Improvement Planning in Three Schools

We conducted more extensive research (see Introduction) on planning for school improvement at three schools -- Montgomery, Rivera, and Winkle. One focus of the study was SIP monitoring and revision, and the second was teacher planning. We had the opportunity to observe considerably more teacher planning at Rivera and Winkle than at Montgomery. The character of the planning and of the plans differed at each school. This report discusses the variation we found in improvement planning efforts.

We have identified two basic categories of improvement planning--symbolic and pragmatic. **Symbolic planning** occurs when planners do not make a serious effort to work towards school improvement. Some symbolic planners are only concerned with meeting the mandate to develop SIP initiatives[2]. Others try to embellish their plan with programs and activities that "sound good," even though the commitment to carry out the initiatives is little or nonexistent. Often those who develop and include an initiative in the plan are not the ones charged with implementing it. In each of these cases, the improvement planning is more "symbolic" than real; it is unlikely to lead to change.

Pragmatic planning, on the other hand, fosters school improvements. The planners are also implementors, and so they hold themselves responsible for undertaking the initiatives. Generally these planners add new initiatives--great or small--to the SIP. Sometimes, however, when the SIP has a legacy of symbolic plans from earlier years, pragmatic planning includes paring the symbolic initiatives down to what implementors are actually willing to do. In both circumstances, the commitment to carry out the activities and programs proposed in the plan becomes the basis for change.

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[2] An "initiative" is a single "plan" within the SIP. Many SIPs consist largely of lists of initiatives. Some initiatives are symbolic and others are pragmatic (see Figure 1 on p. 10).

In the following brief descriptions, we examine how symbolic and pragmatic planning have influenced SIP revision at the case-study schools during the school-reform years. We introduce finer distinctions of pragmatic planning to depict the planning activities at Winkle Elementary. In the next section, using the concepts of vision and accountability, we develop a model that tries to account for the differences in planning among the schools.

At Montgomery Elementary, the previous principal, who took a negative stance towards school reform, wrote the original SIP. He developed an improvement plan solely because it was required, and so much of his planning was symbolic. The original Montgomery SIP included vague initiatives and perfunctory descriptions of the routine. Some examples are: "monitor instruction and pupil progress"; "distribute appropriate basal materials to teachers"; and "organize school for instruction next year." It also included initiatives that "sounded good" but that were not meant to be implemented. That principal called on teachers to "utilize computers and calculators in the instructional program"; two years later, though, many teachers were still unaware that they had access to calculators and computers at the school! He asked teachers to "evaluate pupil progress in all subject areas and adjust instruction to meet individual pupil needs as is necessary," but this is not an action or an endeavor that can ever be satisfied; it is a goal[3]. Montgomery's original SIP had a preponderance of symbolic initiatives -- of empty planning.

The Montgomery LSC selected a new principal right before the deadline for the first revision of the SIP (May, 1991). The new principal kept the original SIP as a base and added three major initiatives: hiring another teacher to extend the kindergarten classes to the full day; devising an after-school program; and hiring a security guard. The principal herself was both planner and implementor of these programs, and all were carried out the following school year. The second version of the Montgomery SIP still had many symbolic statements from the previous plan, but the new initiatives were pragmatic. More members of the school community participated in SIP revision at Montgomery Elementary in 1991-92, and the tendency towards pragmatic planning continued.

Rivera Elementary teachers and administrators felt that the two earlier versions of their SIP, like the original Montgomery improvement plan, were influenced by symbolic planning. Rivera planners had developed some initiatives that "sounded good," but that were not necessarily realistic plans for improvement. The planners of some symbolic initiatives were not those responsible for their implementation. In other cases, the planners were supposed to be the implementors, but not all implementors then carried out the initiatives. For instance, in 1991, teachers planned to "dramatize stories and poems written by students and interact with other classrooms" and "provide curriculum-related field trips" the next year. Some teachers carried out both of the initiatives, but the majority did neither.

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[3] We use the term "goal" as a generalized, desired outcome. Members of the school community work towards goals, but they cannot execute or implement them. In contrast, a pragmatic initiative refers to a new activity, program, or policy that can be implemented or executed.

The earlier SIPs also included initiatives that could not be implemented because they were goals, such as "encourage the use of 'higher thinking skills' to increase inductive and deductive thinking skills in all grades." The first two versions of the Rivera improvement plan were of limited use to staff because they included numerous symbolic initiatives.

During SIP revision in 1992, the school community at Rivera Elementary focused on pragmatic planning. The Rivera principal wanted the revised SIP to include only those initiatives that would indeed be implemented. In order to get schoolwide commitment to implement the SIP, the principal arranged meetings so that the LSC and the entire faculty participated in the planning process. The LSC tried to set new directions for school improvement, and so it proposed seventeen initiatives for faculty and parent consideration. The LSC initiatives, though, continued in the symbolic planning tradition because they relied on teachers and parents, rather than on the LSC, as implementors. The Rivera faculty planned pragmatically; teachers examined the former SIP and the new LSC initiatives, and pared them all down to what they were actually willing to do during the next year. Some teachers also participated on committees to plan new changes as well. The teachers' pragmatic planning this spring helped to eliminate many of the symbolic aspects from the earlier versions of the Rivera SIP.

The Winkle SIP has always formed a coherent framework for school improvement; it is largely the product of pragmatic planning. Our observations at Winkle Elementary this spring, though, revealed that pragmatic planning itself consists of at least three different ways to plan, including incremental, thematic, and directed planning. Incremental planning takes place in almost every school. When planners develop activities that build slowly or in small ways on what is currently done at the school, they are planning incrementally. Some examples of changes resulting from incremental planning are: extending kindergarten classes for the entire school day (Montgomery Elementary); adding a math and/or reading class for upper-grade students to the summer-school program (Rivera Elementary); and updating the junior-high report card (Winkle Elementary). Incremental planning is a conservative dynamic in improvement planning, and it is especially common with plan revision.

Thematic planning initiatives introduce innovative programs into the improvement plan. Whereas incremental planning builds slowly on an already established path, thematic planning takes a significant step in a new direction. The establishment of an after-school program at Montgomery and the adoption of cooperative learning at Rivera are examples of thematic planning. Directed planning has superseded thematic planning at Winkle Elementary.

Directed planning is similar to its thematic counterpart in that planners create major new programs or policies for the SIP. It differs from thematic planning, though, because the initiatives are integrated into the rest of the plan. Thematic initiatives are disparate projects; each thematic plan launches its own direction for school improvement, rather than adding another piece to an improvement framework. Directed initiatives, however, are

inspired by a coherent plan or set of goals for change and then, in turn, they contribute further to plan development.

Directed planning also resembles incremental planning in that it builds on previous action. An incremental initiative adds in small ways to what is already in operation at a school (but may not necessarily be part of the improvement plan). A directed initiative, though, is a major new component to a coherent improvement plan. One difference between these two types of planning is the scope of the planned change (a new activity versus a new program). Perhaps the greater distinction, though, is that incremental planning takes place in any planning situation, but directed planning can only occur in a school with an integrated framework for school improvement.

Winkle's SIP, an integrated plan designed to "rebuild the partnership" among members of the school community, consists of initiatives to develop student, staff, and parent commitment to, and capacities for, increasing student learning. In recent years, staff development has been the main focus of improvement, although this year planners began to work on student-development plans -- especially on plans to build student commitment to learning. The intent of one initiative added to the SIP this spring is to make upper-grade students "...responsible for what they produce in school" (Winkle 1992-93 SIP, p. 15) by enforcing the Board of Education's three minimum standards for eighth-grade graduation (completing the curriculum, passing the U.S. and Illinois Constitution exams, and obtaining a score of 7.5 grade-level equivalents in both math and reading on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills[4]). This graduation initiative engendered major changes in curriculum and assessment procedures in order to help students meet the three minimum standards. The initiative derives from Winkle's coherent framework for increasing student learning, and it contributes specifically to the student-development theme. In revising the Winkle SIP, then, the principal and upper-grade teachers "directed" this initiative into its place within the framework of school improvement plans.

Following the revision of the Winkle SIP, we observed two patterns of improvement planning as the seventh- and eighth-grade faculty prepared to help students build commitment to their own learning next year. Teacher-planners preferred small, cautious growth (incremental planning); the principal, though, favored changes that took the SIP initiative about graduation standards one step further (directed planning). Teachers decided which of the principal's directed initiatives to adopt, and then they relied on incremental planning to carry the changes into the classroom.

At each school, then, we found a different pattern of improvement planning. Montgomery Elementary had a legacy of symbolic initiatives from its original SIP, many of which were so perfunctory that they were meaningless, and we observed an increasing

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[4] In devising the graduation initiative, Winkle planners used materials indicating that the Board of Education's eighth-grade graduation requirements included these minimum *ITBS* scores. After LSC approval of the SIP, they discovered that this Board requirement had been dropped, and they removed that criterion for graduation at Winkle Elementary.

amount of pragmatic (incremental and thematic) planning there this spring. Rivera's earlier SIPs had also contained symbolic initiatives. This year the LSC continued planning in that mode, but the Rivera faculty focused on pragmatic planning to pare down the SIP and the LSC initiatives to what they could actually implement. Winkle's SIP is the product of several years of pragmatic planning. At that school, though, we observed different patterns of pragmatic planning involving both directed and incremental changes. What explains these different approaches to planning at the schools? We propose that school **vision** and establishing **accountability** for plan implementation are the key factors.

A Model of Improvement Planning

Symbolic planning does not represent a serious effort at school improvement because the planners ignore the issue of accountability for implementation. By **accountability**, we mean that administrators, teachers, and parents are aware of the duties that planning allocates to them, and they hold themselves responsible for carrying out those duties. Pragmatic planners, then, are accountable for implementing the initiatives they develop. Therefore accountability for improvement planning differentiates symbolic and pragmatic planning (see Figure 1, page 10).

The contrasts between the planning experiences at Montgomery Elementary and Rivera Elementary this spring are a question of degree. Both schools had inherited symbolic initiatives from earlier versions of their SIPs, yet most improvement planning at the two schools this year was pragmatic, i.e., planners now hold themselves accountable for the implementation of SIP initiatives. Montgomery had an LSC committee to coordinate planning input and to develop some initiatives, but at Rivera, SIP revision was an intensive enterprise involving the entire school community. Whereas only the relatively small number of planners at Montgomery are accountable for their improvement initiatives, the entire staff at Rivera has worked towards schoolwide accountability for its improvement plan.

Pragmatic planning was also the rule at Winkle Elementary. In fact, pragmatic planning had even given shape to the original Winkle SIP. Yet Winkle planners conducted a different type of pragmatic planning than those at the other schools. Disparate themes drove improvement efforts at Montgomery and Rivera. Winkle planners, however, had a coherent framework for school improvement, the SIP, to direct their planning. From our observations, we have concluded that the Winkle planners who worked on the SIP share a comprehensive vision of school improvement that allows them to prioritize goals and to develop and organize initiatives in an integrated fashion. We therefore propose that vision is a prerequisite to a second stage of school planning that emphasizes directed planning (see Figure 2).

In this report, we use the definition of school **vision** developed by Louis and Miles (1990). They characterize vision as **a shared dream that emerges gradually from improvements at the school.** They distinguish their concept of vision from the layman's

Figure 1: Differences Between Symbolic and Pragmatic Planning

SYMBOLIC PLANNING	PRAGMATIC PLANNING
DEFINITION: Planners do not hold themselves accountable for implementing the plan.	DEFINITION: Planners do hold themselves accountable for implementing the plan.
EXAMPLES (from the SIPs): • Vague or general statements and descriptions of the routine: *Monitor instruction and pupil progress.* *Organize school for instruction next year.* • Initiatives that "sound good," but whose implementation is unlikely (often because the implementors are not involved in the planning): *Utilize computers and calculators in the instructional program* [when teachers are unaware that they have access to computers and calculators at the school]. *Offer computer literacy classes to aides.* [Computer teacher is designated as responsible for implementation, yet her work schedule allows no time for such classes.] • Specifying goals, rather than activities or programs: *Evaluate pupil progress in all subject areas and adjust instruction to meet individual pupil needs as is necessary.* *Encourage the use of "higher thinking skills" to increase inductive and deductive thinking skills in all grades.*	EXAMPLES (from the SIPs): • Incremental changes: *Increase use of the basal series to every day for at least one hour a day, instead of four days a week.* *Send survey to parents asking what day and time is best for them to attend meetings.* • Thematic initiatives: *Departmentalize 7th and 8th grades.* *Provide for more enrichment programs for the students; social center, sewing classes, dancing, [and] intramural or scholastic games.* • Directed initiatives that fit into an integrated framework for improvement: [Plan calls for rebuilding the partnership among school constituencies through student, staff, and parent development.] *Fund two writing laboratory positions. Students in grades 4-8 will be scheduled 5 periods per week for writing activities. Class size during the writing period will be reduced by one-half. In the lab, the computer network system and word processing software will allow students to print and save their work. Every student in the program will keep a writing portfolio for sloppy copies and published pieces. It is at these grade levels that the process of revision will begin in earnest through the teaching of English language grammar and syntax when appropriate and in context.*

notion by defining it as **the product of real change**, rather than as vague aspirations or wishful thinking about the school.

Louis and Miles have found that school communities with successfully planned and implemented changes are in a position to develop a vision.

> One of the great motivational outcomes of good planning is consensus about where the school ought to be going, and at least some tentative ideas about how it ought to try to get there. This consensus becomes the embryo vision (pp. 227-228).

Consequently, one scenario for vision development begins with planning. Some implemented plans produce better results than others. Planners build on what has worked well by devising new plans to develop, expand on, or add to the effective projects. Eventually the planning and implementing delineate a limited number of broadly defined directions that change is taking at the school; these directions for change are **improvement themes**. Some examples of improvement themes are: staff empowerment, enhancement of the school building and grounds, projects and activities to increase attendance, and parent development. At some point, then, the principal or another major planner weaves together the various themes into a unified vision of school improvement.

Planners and implementors have vested interests in the improvement themes they have helped to develop at the school. Since good planning produces a consensus about the improvement themes, that consensus helps shape the vision. To spread the new vision through the school community, a principal works to broaden the planners' commitment from the independent improvement themes to the full, overarching vision.

Figure 2: Adding Vision to Accountability in Improvement Planning

STAGE 1 PLANNING	STAGE 2 PLANNING
SYMBOLIC VS. PRAGMATIC	PRAGMATIC
Planning characterized by differences in the degree of accountability for initiative implementation:	*Planning directed by accountability and a school vision:*
symbolic planning vs. : • incremental planning • thematic planning	• incremental planning • directed planning

A school's vision arises from the good planning and accountable implementation that lead to school change. In turn, the vision can influence plans and implementation. Louis and Miles note:

> It's also clear that a vision is an important bridge between planning and implementation. A vision that begins to emerge during planning has driving power, energizing movement into actualizing initial plans. Even more crucially, it supplies

clear criteria for choosing what is more and less important in the way of change activities (p. 219).

The vision increasingly provides a framework for organizing and prioritizing initiatives, and for designing new, directed plans. Hence, a school vision usually arises from school improvement, directs subsequent planning towards more ambitious goals, and inspires further action (Louis and Miles 1990).

Winkle's vision is to increase student learning by having students, staff, and parents work together as partners. Not surprisingly, this vision translates into an improvement plan with three priorities: student development, staff development, and parent development. The implementation of the SIP suggests appropriate incremental revisions and new, directed initiatives that "fit" into one of the development themes of the plan. Thus, as indicated in Figure 2, we maintain that school vision is a prerequisite to directed planning.

In this first chapter, we have reported on SIP monitoring and revision in our sample of fourteen schools and have proposed a model of the influences on improvement planning at elementary schools. The next chapter highlights the struggles of three school communities to develop both accountability for their improvement plans and planning directed by a school vision. The final chapter of this report lists suggestions for monitoring and revising school improvement plans based on the case studies and on recommendations from principals and PPAC chairpersons.

II. CASE-STUDY SCHOOLS

New Planning at Montgomery Elementary School

Montgomery Elementary is a prekindergarten through eighth-grade school serving over 500 students on the west side of Chicago. This neighborhood school is 100 percent African American and 100 percent low income, and draws most of its students from an adjacent housing project. Although Montgomery does not suffer from some of the problems that plague many Chicago Public Schools such as low attendance, high mobility, building disrepair and overcrowding, it nevertheless has its share of troubles. Teachers complain of rampant discipline problems, and parents worry about student safety in and around the school. Student test scores are near the bottom with 90 percent of the children below the national average in reading and more than 80 percent below average in math.

Earlier Planning

Montgomery Elementary School has made major strides in its school improvement efforts. When the reform legislation was enacted in the fall of 1989, Mr. Jackson had been principal for thirteen years and viewed reform as nothing more then an intrusion by those unequipped to deal with the school's problems. In Montgomery's first school improvement plan, Mr. Jackson wrote:

> School reform is a paper intensive, meeting oriented, time consuming effort that diminished the energy and creative talents of the staff and parents who are sincerely attempting to meet the demands placed upon them. If legislative mandates are all that is needed to correct social conditions and shortcomings there would be no problems with drugs, crime, poverty or the myriad other problems facing society (Montgomery 1990-91 SIP, p. 40).

Montgomery's original school improvement plan did little to demonstrate that school reform would produce significant change. The majority of initiatives were symbolic, concentrating on activities that all schools routinely do. The reading plans that year, for example, included the following reform initiatives:

- Assign ancillary staff to assist primary teachers in the instructional process
- Evaluate student progress and report to parents
- Analyze current pupil test data to plan for reading instruction
- Administer ITBS and IGAP tests in accordance with directives
- Distribute appropriate basal reading materials to teachers
- Begin reading program at the start of the 2nd week of school

Other symbolic initiatives were actually stated as goals. Two examples are: "participate in community programs and activities" and "utilize all pragmatic approaches and ideas to realize objectives." Here the planners stated desired outcomes or goals instead of specific actions, leaving implementation to unknown persons accepting unnamed responsibilities. In short, the original Montgomery SIP, characterized by symbolic initiatives, was not the impetus for significant changes.

Tensions between the LSC and principal developed as the LSC perceived that the principal was not addressing schoolwide problems. The principal's disdain for the governance capacities of the LSC further eroded the fragile relationship. When Mr. Jackson's contract came up for review during the second year of school reform, he was informed that the council would form a principal-selection committee and conduct a search.[5] After extensive deliberation, the LSC chose a new principal, Mrs. Waites, to lead Montgomery.

Mrs. Waites assumed her duties on April 29, 1991, just two days before the first revised school improvement plan was due. Some school planners spend months preparing their SIPs. Denied an extension of the SIP deadline by the Central Office, Mrs. Waites concentrated on introducing a few more initiatives to the SIP that were supported by faculty and parents. Her revisions reflected three major needs of Montgomery: 1) a full day kindergarten, 2) improved security, and 3) an after school program.

The second-year plan basically remained the same as the original plan, retaining all of the symbolic initiatives. Nevertheless, Mrs. Waites had taken a new approach to improvement planning -- pragmatic planning. Not only did she plan several changes, but she assumed responsibility for them herself. By taking on both roles, she established accountability for the planning initiatives added the second year; this is pragmatic planning. Mrs. Waites admits that the second-year plan was not perfect, but she believes its implementation provided the initial steps toward school improvement.

To address the issue of safety, Mrs. Waites hired a security officer. Although the principal was unaware of specific incidents that instilled a feeling of fear in the school, she noted that the former principal encouraged teachers to lock their classroom doors (a practice that she believes is unwarranted). Teachers and parents both identified school security as an important issue, in part due to security-related incidents at other schools. Mrs. Waites abided by their concerns and allocated money for this position. She was intent on hiring a guard who would do more than just stand at the door. The job description called for a security person who could get to know students and act as a role model. Mrs. Waites interviewed applicants until she found the right person for the job.

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[5] For more information on the principal selection process, see Easton et. al. (1991). Decision Making and School Improvement: LSCs in the First Two Years of Reform. Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

Mr. Rollins, who is also a full-time police officer with the city, sees his job not only as providing a sense of security in the school, but also as advising students. He often strikes up conversations with students and, on more than one occasion, he has played the role of parent. He wants Montgomery to change for the better. If he has an idea about improving the school, he does not hesitate to bring it to the principal. His presence is not limited to the lobby or hallways. If a teacher is having problems with a few students, she may ask for Mr. Rollins to assist rather than send them to the office.

The full day kindergarten program was the second focus of SIP implementation. With the use of State Chapter 1 funds, Mrs. Waites hired an additional kindergarten teacher. Each kindergarten class would now stay for a full school day rather than the usual half-day program. This program was in place at the start of the 91-92 school year.

Finally, Mrs. Waites requested and received funding for an after school program. In addition to offering volleyball, basketball, art and cartooning classes, the principal initiated a male responsibility program. As the name implies, the goal of this program is to develop a sense of responsibility in boys with the hope that this will lead to better behavior and schoolwork. This program for selected upper grade students is taught by another teacher hired by Mrs. Waites. The principal believes that this program, coupled with the security guard, has improved student behavior and the school climate.

These three changes did not require significant participation by the majority of classroom teachers. They were instituted after the principal hired staff who were responsible for conducting the programs. This was the first step in moving away from symbolic planning toward pragmatic planning. All three pragmatic initiatives were in place during the first few months of the school year. These initial improvements also signified to the faculty that unlike the former SIP, initiatives in the revised version were implemented.

Year Three of School Improvement Planning

In the spring of 1992, the Montgomery school community had its first opportunity to devise a comprehensive plan to address the school's needs. In a sense, Montgomery was now in the situation faced by most Chicago school during their first year of writing school improvement plans.

The Principal

Mrs. Waites wanted to plan comprehensively for the following year as required by the reform legislation. In an attempt to avoid the previous year's frantic pace, she started the process in early March. She formed an SIP committee and over the ten weeks conducted a series of school improvement planning meetings. We observed seven of the eight SIP committee meetings.

The principal served as committee leader, guiding the group as it revised the plan. Mrs. Waites designated the first meeting as a brainstorming session. To ensure that all had their say and that an array of ideas was generated, Mrs. Waites went around the table asking each person for a suggestion until everyone was out of ideas. As ideas were offered, a teacher put them up on newsprint which covered one classroom wall.

The principal distributed the list of suggestions at the next meeting, along with a profile of Montgomery students and their test scores. This provided committee members with baseline data about the school, and assisted them in assessing priorities. Mrs. Waites steered the meeting by asking committee members to categorize their suggestions according to goal areas. Different ideological viewpoints began to surface at this meeting.

The principal changed her tactics during the next three meetings. She asked the committee to devise specific strategies to address the systemwide goals. This approach to SIP planning is common since most SIPs are organized according to the Board of Education's twenty goals listed in the *School Improvement Planning Guide*, (Chicago Public Schools, 1990a). The first five goals deal with achievement in different subject areas, and they consumed most of the committee's time.

At the final two meetings, budgeting took priority over planning. In reality the scenario became "this is how much money we have available, so which initiatives can we actually carry out?" The principal asked the committee to prioritize initiatives, but funding, in essence, drove the discussion. Other initiatives that required little or no funding, but rely on people's time, were left out of the discussion.

Mrs. Waites managed the school improvement planning process. She organized and directed the SIP committee. She was receptive to all input as long as "it benefitted the children." She emphasized that planners be responsible for the implementation of new initiatives and that they set aside funds for them in the budget. Mrs. Waites helped to build a sense of accountability for improvement planning at Montgomery through the collaboration of the teachers and LSC members on the SIP committee.

Teachers

Although the SIP committee was open to everyone in the school community, a core group of twelve to fifteen persons attended the meetings. The majority of the committee members were teachers, although a few LSC members and parents also participated. Non-attending teachers also had opportunities to channel their revision ideas through the PPAC representative and the principal. In March during grade-level meetings, the principal asked the staff for suggestions. Some teachers took this occasion to provide input in lieu of attending SIP meetings.

Mrs. Waites had arranged the school schedule so that faculty teaching the same grades had their planning periods at the same time. This allowed teachers to meet together

and plan. The primary teachers took advantage of the grade-level meetings to develop a proposal for a whole-language program. The proposal, a thematic initiative, calls for four of the primary teachers to plan and implement whole-language reading classes starting in 1993.

Teachers were the most active planners in revising the school improvement plan. A core group of seven or eight teacher leaders attended the SIP meetings consistently. They presented their own ideas and the suggestions of colleagues. Their initiatives were usually incorporated into the final plan. Planning done in both the grade-level meetings and the SIP committee meetings greatly shaped the third Montgomery SIP.

LSC

The LSC had little involvement in revising the plan, although some members did participate in the SIP committee meetings. When the principal first established the SIP committee, it was relatively informal in structure. She invited everyone in the school community to participate, and she wanted the meetings to facilitate the free flow of information in a collaborative environment. At the following LSC meeting, members debated whether the planning committee was an official LSC committee. They finally voted that the SIP committee was an official LSC committee. The SIP committee, however, retained its relatively loose structure and all who attended were encouraged to offer their ideas.

The LSC meetings regarding the school improvement plan were not always congenial. The more or less predictable discussions concerning the school improvement plan were disrupted by two events. The first was the possibility of hiring a technical consultant for school improvement planning. The discussion over hiring the consultant was a heated one. Personnel from the Office of Reform Implementation[6] came to the school, at the request of the principal, to clarify that the decision was the principal's since she was ultimately responsible for the plan.

The second incident was a $70,000 cut in Federal Chapter I funds two days before the school improvement plan deadline. This was especially infuriating to Mrs. Waites, who had started planning early to ensure that the committee and the LSC would have ample time to make hard choices wisely. The committee had made its planning decisions and allocated funding to the proposed initiatives a week before the plan was due. Because of the cuts, though, the LSC then reconsidered some of the committee's planning and budgeting decisions. It finally voted to approve the reworked SIP and budget recommended by the SIP committee.

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[6] The Office of Reform Implementation was established by the Chicago Board of Education in 1989 to deal with reform-related issues. In addition to answering questions and providing training, personnel also assist schools in mediating disputes about governance issues.

The LSC's involvement in SIP revision was minimal. Its crucial decisions were made at the onset (whether to hire a consultant) and at the completion of the plan (approving the plan and budget). Most of the planning took place during SIP committee meetings which only a few council members attended regularly.

Discussion of Planning Efforts

Montgomery is in the initial stage of developing schoolwide accountability and vision (see Figure 2 on p. 11). The original plan was symbolic and did little effort was made to build accountability among the school community. For example, the teachers who will eventually implement a primary whole-language program developed the plans for it. The idea and development of a cross grade whole language program was done by teachers who will implement the program. Establishing accountability however, depends not only on the developers being the implementors, but also on having specific pragmatic plans. This year SIP planners turned away from symbolic initiatives in favor of pragmatic ones. For example, planners refocused a staff development initiative that once read "inservice teachers on the mandated goal and the effective strategies of teaching the language arts skills." The initiative in the revised plan is for teachers to participate in an intensive ten-week staff development course known as the Illinois Writing Project.

The budget and school improvement plan are usually approved by the LSC at the same time. Montgomery's planners first focused on the SIP initiatives, however, as the deadline for approval loomed near, their attention shifted almost exclusively to budget concerns. This took attention away from pragmatic planning. Ideally, the school improvement plan and budget are two distinct tasks. The SIP should be completed first and a core set of initiatives prioritized before starting the budgeting process.

A comprehensive vision for Montgomery is not yet in place, but as the scope of staff accountability increases, we believe the vision will begin to take shape. Although the entire staff was encouraged to provide input, either through grade-level meetings or SIP committee meetings, participation was voluntary. As a result, those who worked on the plan will are accountable. This accountability for the improvement plan, however, is not schoolwide. This is not a negative reflection on the school, considering Montgomery's starting point. Moving from symbolic to pragmatic planning is a lengthy process especially for a new principal needing to win support of the staff members.

Mrs. Waites strategy is to work with the teachers willing to be accountable for new programs and services. She helps write grants, gather resources, access information, and funds staff for curriculum planning possible. In summary, the principal has been the catalyst for promoting accountability for school improvement planning. Mrs. Waites' challenge is to increase the number of teachers willing to actively participate in change efforts in order for a schoolwide vision to be realized.

Building Accountability at Rivera Elementary School

Rivera Elementary is a large neighborhood school that enrolls mostly Hispanic students, although some African American, white, Asian American, and Native American children also attend. The local school council chair and other members of the school community identify neighborhood gang recruitment as a critical problem affecting the lives of the children. The student body has a fairly high rate of mobility, and virtually all of the children come from low-income families.

Rivera Elementary provides classes from prekindergarten through eighth grade, and also offers separate bilingual classes. The school consists of a main building and a branch. Many school operations, including improvement planning and most teacher interactions, take place independently by building. Both buildings, however, share administrative and supervisory personnel.

Many factors at Rivera facilitate the efforts of the school community to work towards school improvement. The principal is committed to developing and utilizing parent resources at the school. She also seeks out new programs that benefit the children developmentally and scholastically, along with the grants needed to fund the programs. The numerous parent groups participate actively in improving their children's school. Teacher leadership is strong at Rivera Elementary, including both the supervisory staff and some classroom teachers. In harmony with school reform and the active interests of these constituencies, the principal has been decentralizing some planning and decision making to parents and teachers over the last few years. These conditions set the stage for the changes in the improvement planning process that occurred this spring at Rivera Elementary.

According to members of the faculty, in previous years the school improvement plan had had limited impact on the supposed implementors of its activities. Although teachers reviewed it every fall, they tended to ignore it or to forget about it during the rest of the school year. One teacher commented that upon beginning plan revision in February this year, a considerable number of the faculty had not even remembered that everyone had a copy of the SIP in the teacher handbook! Clearly the SIP guided relatively little of the planning that Rivera teachers did during the school year.

Rivera teachers noted reasons for not making greater use of the SIP in the past, however. They had not regarded the SIP as a "user friendly" plan. First, the entire school community agreed that the text had been very complete, but too long to be much of an aid to the continuous planning teachers must do. The 1990 version of the SIP, for example, was over 125 pages, and the 1991 version was even longer. Many teachers had considered the SIP to be a cumbersome reference instead of a plan to guide and monitor their own lesson planning.

Second, in the past, some SIP planners at Rivera had devised overly ambitious projects and idealistic activities for themselves or for others to implement, i.e., they did symbolic planning. One teacher explained that a few years ago the Board of Education had

required schools to write "action plans" that, in many cases, turned out to be completely unrealistic documents. Action plans were expected to "sound good," not necessarily assist staff in improving the school. She believed that their experiences with the action plans had taught school planners to value creative plans with questionable possibilities of being carried out, over mundane, pragmatic ones that planners seriously meant to implement. Thus, the Rivera SIPs, like the action plans, contained some "sound-good" initiatives. Several members of the Rivera staff described this as a poor approach to improvement planning that had resulted in symbolic initiatives and limited accountability for the earlier plans.

Third, the Rivera SIP has yet to be influenced by a school vision. The SIP includes a mission statement which was rewritten this spring. Although it has not guided planning or action to date, the new mission statement may eventually play a role in vision development. Louis and Miles (1990) have found that a school vision coalesces from the actions taken on diverse school improvement goals; it then provides a common direction for plans and for how they are implemented. A vision provides a framework for selecting, prioritizing, and organizing goals and activities in an improvement plan. As is true at many schools, the Rivera SIP is arranged by the systemwide goals, rather than by independent school goals. Most of the initiatives in the SIP are neither prioritized nor organized within each goal statement. Teachers and parents referring to the SIP have few clues about how to find out what they are responsible for (without searching through the whole SIP), which activities to concentrate their energies on, or how their implementation efforts contribute to the larger plan of school improvement. Although several recent changes at the school have the potential to begin shaping a vision, as yet planning at Rivera Elementary lacks this direction.

This year's school improvement planning at Rivera Elementary resolved one of the "user unfriendly" problems of the earlier SIPs; teachers pared away many of the symbolic initiatives in a serious effort to establish their own accountability for the plan. Every administrator and teacher participated in the SIP revision process. The LSC and a few parents not on the council also became very involved with the improvement planning. The principal led the LSC and the teachers in this task, organizing everything so that SIP review could begin at the first of February. Results from fairly extensive SIP evaluation provided information to members of the school community about which initiatives were not being carried out and which outcomes were not being achieved. Armed with evaluation data and an early start, the administrators, parents, and teachers at Rivera Elementary were able to make their SIP a better improvement plan.

Monitoring and Evaluating the SIP

The principal of Rivera Elementary employed a variety of methods to evaluate the implementation and success of SIP activities and goals. She used student performance on standardized tests as a monitoring tool for objectives dealing with student achievement. For example, at the first LSC meeting on the SIP, the principal presented charts of the school's *Illinois Goals Assessment Program* test scores for 1990 and 1991 to illustrate declines and

increases by subject area. Since the scores had increased in all subjects except reading, the LSC decided to make reading a major focus of their improvement planning considerations.

In addition to standardized test scores, the principal used longitudinal information from the *Effective Schools Battery* to assess initiatives concerning student and teacher attitudes about the school and its programs. She announced to the LSC and the teachers that the three-year results of this survey showed a persistent problem with low student self-esteem. Both groups then regarded the problem as another focus of their school improvement planning.

A second type of SIP monitoring complemented the principal's analysis of quantitative outcome measures. From October through January, one resource teacher examined the implementation of all the activities in Rivera's lengthy improvement plan. In the Rivera SIP, beside each initiative appears the name or title of the person or persons responsible for implementing that initiative. For the evaluation, then, the resource teacher asked all the parties responsible for plan implementation if the initiatives had yet been carried out. For instance, she distributed forms listing every activity that classroom teachers were responsible for implementing, and requested that each teacher indicate whether or not she or he had carried out the activities and the date(s) of compliance. The resource teacher then tallied the results by initiative to produce a faculty self-evaluation of SIP implementation. She disseminated the results to the teachers and the principal. She used the same procedure for other implementors. By the time SIP revision began in February, she had assembled a fairly complete self-evaluation of the extent to which the SIP activities had been implemented.

From the self-evaluations, the principal estimated that at least some of the implementors had carried out about eighty percent of the activities in the 1991-92 SIP. Perceiving this figure to be too low and being concerned about the general disregard for the SIP as a guide to planning and action, she decided to push for greater accountability for the improvement plan. She asked teachers and administrators to consider what they were actually willing to do, and to cut out the symbolic initiatives. Her objective was to make the SIP a realistic and useful base for steering and gauging the subsequent planning of school community members. The LSC and teacher leaders endorsed the principal's goal, and building accountability for improvement planning became the driving force in SIP revision at Rivera Elementary this spring.

Building Accountability for the SIP

The Principal's Part

The principal of Rivera Elementary actively managed school improvement planning this year. She decided how to organize SIP revision and delegated the tasks. She wrote part of the SIP herself, facilitated LSC and teacher decision making, and reviewed the plans

made by all groups. Perhaps most importantly, she set the revision goal of cutting symbolic initiatives out of the SIP and establishing schoolwide accountability for plan implementation.

The principal believed that widespread involvement in SIP revision was necessary to set a clear direction for improvement efforts and to build accountability. She asked all Rivera teachers to participate through their grade-level groups, and then suggested that they review their colleagues' revisions in building-level meetings (see the teachers' section). She urged the LSC to set a new course for school improvement, to focus their planning efforts on particular goals, and to hold full meetings for the revision task, rather than assigning it to a committee. The administrative and supervisory staff members were responsible for updating certain initiatives, and the principal also requested them to chair planning committees for certain topics. She charged supervisory staff with evaluating the SIP, pulling together the revision proposals from the various teacher groups, and preparing preliminary budgets for funds from categorical sources. The Rivera principal encouraged this extensive participation with the SIP in order to construct a forum for discussing "where the school was going," for familiarizing the entire school community with the directions selected, and for building widespread commitment to those directions.

Although not her most important contribution to improvement planning this spring, the principal did help revise the plan directly. She reviewed and modified the activities associated with staff involvement in decision making at the school (objective 17.1). She also took the lead in rewriting the SIP mission statement so that it succinctly describes what the Rivera school community wants for the students.

The principal facilitated and supervised the improvement planning of both the LSC and the teachers. She helped the council define its planning role. Under her leadership, LSC members decided to propose new directions for school improvement by recommending that seventeen initiatives be added to the SIP. The principal shared her conviction about the importance of establishing accountability for improvement plans with teacher leaders. They agreed with her and communicated this goal to the teachers. At the teachers' building-level planning meetings, she reminded teachers of this priority and acted as arbitrator of planning disputes. Following teacher agreement on the revisions, the principal reviewed all the proposed changes and incorporated them into the plan for final LSC approval. In seven areas, plans could not be finished by the May deadline for the SIP, and the principal then organized committees of staff and LSC members to continue planning in those areas for the next academic year. Thus, the Rivera principal closely directed the revision of the SIP, and she encouraged teachers and the LSC to collaborate on follow-up improvement planning for the fall.

Like many other principals, the principal at Rivera managed the processes of SIP review and revision at her school. She assigned tasks, organized and facilitated meetings, set deadlines, and reviewed planners' proposals and compromises. Unlike most other principals, though, the Rivera principal also set a goal of building widespread accountability for school improvement through plan revision; she used her capacity as manager to reach this goal.

As manager of the SIP revision process, the Rivera principal divided the planning labor between the LSC and the faculty. On the one hand, she asked the LSC to consider new directions for school improvement, inviting both symbolic and pragmatic proposals from the council. The LSC complied by formulating seventeen new SIP initiatives -- all of which were symbolic plans. On the other hand, she encouraged the faculty to abandon symbolic planning and to eliminate symbolic activities from the SIP, leaving just those initiatives for which they would hold themselves accountable (pragmatic planning). These opposite planning thrusts forced teachers to contemplate what earlier planners and what the current LSC asked of them, and then to define what their real contributions to school improvement would be. So, through her management of SIP revision this spring, the principal of Rivera Elementary was able to promote faculty accountability for the improvement plan.

Her second strategy for establishing schoolwide responsibility for plan implementation was to oblige the entire school community to act as improvement planners. Rivera LSC members and teachers spent hours and hours reflecting on, and planning for, school improvement. The principal commented that "...the most important thing [about SIP revision] was the involvement of the teachers -- the process...." She explained that this was true because the involvement, or the process, had significantly advanced teacher accountability for the plan. She added, "It wasn't so important what was there [in the SIP], but that the teachers believed that these things would result in improvements."

The LSC's Part

The Rivera Elementary LSC set their priorities as reviewing and revising the SIP activities for two sets of goals -- improving student self-esteem and increasing parent and community involvement with the school. In response to the principal's report on the decline in reading scores, the LSC then decided to study the reading initiatives as well. The LSC's intention was to discuss these activities, revise them as needed, and plan further initiatives to direct future school improvement. To accomplish this, the LSC held one regular and six special meetings in the course of six weeks, meeting yet a final time to approve the revised SIP.

The meetings culminated in a few changes to the previous year's activities and a list of seventeen more initiatives for school improvement. The list of recommendations resulted from LSC efforts to select directions to guide Rivera school improvements. It reflected the belief, held by a majority of the council members, that some teachers and parents were participating too little in school improvement efforts. Thus, one of the directions which the LSC chose for school improvement was to increase teacher and parent involvement in student learning. Others included redesigning the library and computer programs, building student self-esteem, and improving parent-teacher relations.

The LSC was very concerned with the amount of parent participation at Rivera Elementary. One of the special meetings was devoted to discussing ways in which the school could encourage greater parent involvement in all aspects of their children's education.

Although the LSC spent a considerable amount of time on parent issues, only two of the seventeen initiatives dealt specifically with parents. One recommendation was that a parent liaison be assigned to each grade level in order to foster better teacher-parent communication and to encourage more parent participation in school activities. The other was that the school require a small fee from parents to help purchase supplemental reading materials for the students.

Five of the seventeen LSC initiatives pertained directly to teachers. The council discussions explored ways that teachers could be more responsive to students and parents. Some of their recommendations were: that all teachers attend staff development in the areas of student motivation, cooperative learning, and computers; that mechanisms be put into place to allow for more teacher cooperation and collegiality; that computers be used in all classrooms; and that the autumn open house be a time when teachers inform parents about both their objectives for the year and school policies. In addition, six other initiatives less directly affected the teachers by calling for changes in the curricular program.

One focus for school improvement chosen by the LSC was the accountability of teachers and parents, rather than its own accountability. Consequently, the council tended to plan symbolically. It devised activities and programs for others (parents and teachers) to implement. By having these constituencies consider its ideas, the LSC took a first step towards securing greater accountability from them for the new directions in school improvement. In the end, the 1992-93 SIP included five LSC initiatives that were reworded without changing the meaning, seven initiatives with some revision, and four in significantly altered or "watered down" versions.

The Rivera Elementary LSC conducted its review and revision of the SIP in a serious and thoughtful manner. This year the council held more full meetings to monitor, discuss, and improve the SIP than any of the other thirteen councils studied by the Chicago Panel. It set some directions for change. It also devised important planning initiatives, and garnered support for them from those called on to implement the initiatives. Over time, these accomplishments are likely to have positive results on student learning at Rivera Elementary.

By focusing on parents and teachers, however, the Rivera LSC overlooked the opportunity to develop its own capacities for facilitating school improvement. For example, it addressed the need to improve parent-teacher relations, but ignored the problem of poor LSC-teacher communication[7]. It recommended staff development for teachers, but did not

[7] The authors became especially aware of this problem when the LSC initiatives were presented to the faculty (see section on the teachers). In a school as large and diverse as Rivera, it is virtually impossible for two LSC teacher representatives alone to forge adequate avenues of communication between the LSC and the faculty. Some of the other councils in the Chicago Panel study have a report from the faculty (by the PPAC chair or another teacher representative) on the agenda at all regular meetings and take st[illegible] (convenient scheduling, reminders) to encourage faculty attendance at meetings. LSC representatives can also recap council actions and discussions for the faculty after each meeting, seeking teacher input on the issues.

plan further training experiences for its own members. The Rivera council contributed to school improvement planning, but excluded itself from the actual plans.

Through its work on SIP revision, the LSC wanted to reinforce the principal's goal by encouraging teachers and parents to examine their accountability for school improvement. Although its own approach to planning was symbolic, members of the LSC were able to negotiate with teacher and parent implementors. The negotiations converted some of the symbolic initiatives into pragmatic ones by involving the implementors in the planning, and by confirming their commitment to carry out the initiatives. So despite its reliance on symbolic planning, the LSC contributed to the schoolwide goal of establishing accountability for the SIP at Rivera Elementary.

The Teachers' Part

Because of the large size of Rivera Elementary, the principal tried out some elements of "schools-within-a-school" organization this year. She assigned two grades per floor in the main building. She then asked teachers to meet weekly in their two-grade groups with the other teachers on the floor. Teachers in the branch held weekly building meetings and sometimes met in single grade-level groups for certain purposes. The principal hoped that the smaller meetings would facilitate team-building among teachers and increase faculty participation in decision making.

To review and revise the SIP, teachers first met in their grade-level groups. These meetings began in early February and continued through the end of that month. The entire branch faculty met to finalize their SIP proposals at two meetings late in February, and in March they discussed the seventeen LSC initiatives at one meeting. Teachers in the main building held five full-faculty meetings during March to review the revision proposals from the various teacher groups and from the LSC. The principal developed committees to continue planning in seven areas because the details could not be finalized by the May deadline for the SIP. With the exception of the modifications that the LSC later made to one or two teacher initiatives, the activities that teachers approved at their meeting on March 31, 1992, became part of the text of the 1992-93 Rivera SIP.

The principal had asked teachers to focus on the activities that they were responsible for implementing, and to pare them down to what would actually be done next year. Teachers could suggest new initiatives as long as the faculty agreed to implement them. Rivera teachers realized that the principal wanted a shorter, more realistic plan, with pragmatic initiatives and teacher accountability for them.

Many Rivera teachers agreed with the principal about paring down the SIP, although not all shared her rationale for doing so. Wishing to be freer from policy restrictions on their classrooms, some teachers wanted to reduce the constraints generated by the SIP. One teacher told members of her grade-level group that complying with SIP requirements consumes too much instructional time. Frustrated by this situation, she added that teachers

must choose either to eliminate fun and creative projects from their classes or to risk a poor evaluation. "Classroom teachers don't just do what's in the SIP! As soon as it's in the SIP, they're on our case." Like this teacher, several accountable Rivera faculty members favored a smaller SIP in order to have fewer restrictions on their classroom activities. They believed that school improvement efforts limit the individual teacher's improvement efforts.

Teacher leaders and other classroom teachers, however, wanted the SIP to be a clear statement of teacher responsibilities for school improvement, and they wanted teachers to decide what such a statement should include. At a grade-level meeting, one classroom teacher explained to her colleagues that if an activity were in the SIP, they would all have to do it. She said, "Last year we put words on paper. We embellished it – made it look good." She argued that SIP monitoring showed that they had not carried out some of those plans, and that they had to return to the real baseline activities. Like the principal, these teachers sought to establish teacher accountability for the SIP.

The first stages of faculty involvement with the SIP this year were the floor meetings (two grade levels) in the main building and the single-grade meetings in the branch. All the Rivera classroom and resource teachers participated in these meetings. The small groups brought issues to the table for discussion and initiated a pragmatic (especially incremental) approach to SIP revision.

Discussion at most of the grade-level meetings centered on the activities to be implemented by the classroom teachers. At times, though, an initiative provoked broader deliberations about an issue. For instance, during their discussions of a particular computer activity, teachers in both buildings digressed onto the subject of the school's entire computer program. At a meeting in the main building, teachers exchanged ideas about how to increase student use of computers, including updating the software and starting an after-school computer program. At a grade-level meeting in the branch, teachers questioned each other about which students could attend the computer lab and what they did there. They considered suggesting that the computer-lab curriculum be modified to reinforce specific concepts taught in the classroom. Neither group of teachers followed up on its suggestions by developing new SIP activities immediately. Since two LSC initiatives dealt with the computer program, however, some of these ideas resurfaced in subsequent teacher meetings. One outcome, then, of the grade-level meetings was limited, but earnest, teacher consideration of issues not fully dealt with in the earlier improvement plans.

The grade-level meetings also gave shape to the teachers' pragmatic -- even incremental -- approach to school improvement plan revision. Following the SIP forms given them by the principal, the small groups of teachers tended to examine each activity and consider if they currently did it and if they would do it next year. If the activity had not been implemented by many teachers (usually a symbolic initiative), the teachers proposed that it be deleted from the SIP; if implemented, they usually elected to keep it or modify it. Teachers had a school-imposed deadline to finish the small-group revisions by the end of February, and they rushed to complete the assignment on time. Despite the hours they invested in SIP revision, Rivera teachers actually had little time to develop new initiatives,

especially during the grade-level sessions. Thus, in the grade-level meetings, teachers adopted a pragmatic approach to SIP revision. They generally made incremental changes to the previous year's improvement plan and pared away vestiges of earlier symbolic planning.

In late February and throughout March, Rivera teachers met in building-wide groups to finish their SIP revisions. The principal attended most of these meetings, but teacher leaders generally took charge of them. During the meetings, teachers arrived at a building-wide consensus about their contributions to the improvement plan for the next year and debated the seventeen LSC initiatives. At the last meeting on March 31, 1992, faculty in the main building gave final approval to the teachers' SIP revisions.

Prior to these meetings, one teacher leader at each building had compiled and organized all the SIP revisions decided on at the grade-level meetings in that building. The building-level SIP revision then began with teacher leaders presenting, goal by goal, the compiled results -- most of which were incremental changes. Only occasionally did teachers interrupt the presenters with questions, comments, or disagreements about the contents of the revised initiatives. In one such instance, a teacher challenged the elimination of an activity to develop and use a math vocabulary list. The principal explained that its elimination meant only that it would no longer be required of all teachers. She added that those teachers who still wanted to use a math vocabulary list should do so. Following this clarification, teachers discussed relatively few of the compiled changes. The Rivera faculty did not consider its own incremental planning very controversial.

In contrast, teachers regarded the LSC's symbolic planning as very contentious. The LSC had established the directions of change, and so had planned activities and programs for others -- mainly teachers -- to implement (see LSC section). The two LSC teacher representatives presented the council's list of seventeen initiatives to the faculty at each building. They carefully introduced the list as suggestions and ideas for further development, and they encouraged teachers to examine them openly. Despite the cautious presentation, Rivera teachers recognized that the LSC initiatives made extra demands on the faculty. Some teachers even felt that the LSC initiatives singled out the faculty for criticism, and they expressed anger and resentment at the council and its proposals. Because the LSC had made plans for teachers without seeking much teacher input, its efforts at improvement initially antagonized the faculty.

Throughout March, as teachers discussed the LSC's list of initiatives, they came to accept some of the initiatives, they proposed compromises for others, and they developed a mechanism for dealing with the rest. The first meeting on the initiatives involved the faculty in the main building. At that meeting, the teachers were able to review only the first three initiatives because the third introduced a complicated web of problems concerning the computer program. When the discussion resumed at a meeting one week later, a teacher leader quickly suggested that complex issues such as the computer and library programs be referred to planning committees, and other teachers concurred. They then continued to review the LSC initiatives. By the end of that meeting, the faculty in the main building had

generally accepted seven initiatives, developed two compromise proposals, and left eight initiatives unresolved for further planning. Later that week, the LSC teacher representatives presented the LSC initiatives to the branch faculty. Since the planning committees had already been established as a mechanism for handling the complex and controversial initiatives, teachers at the branch readily agreed with the decisions made by their colleagues at the main building. The building-level meetings thus gave teachers a forum for negotiating about the LSC's symbolic plans. In the end, teachers agreed to some of the initiatives they had been asked to implement, a process which transformed those initiatives into pragmatic plans, and they sent the rest to committees for further planning.

After consulting with the administrative and supervisory staff and with members of the LSC, the principal decided to organize seven planning committees. She appointed herself, the assistant principal, the counselor, and the resource teachers as the chairs. Each committee included the chair, at least one LSC member, staff members affected by the planning done by that committee, and other volunteers. Most of the committees reached some decisions by the SIP and budget deadlines, but continued the bulk of their planning through the end of the school year.

Most of the Rivera faculty agreed with the principal's goal of establishing schoolwide accountability for the SIP. A few teachers remained apathetic throughout the planning process and this small group is likely to introduce some unevenness into SIP implementation efforts in the fall. In general, however, Rivera teachers now regard themselves as more accountable for the SIP because their professional judgments were a critical factor in the planning; they assumed ownership of the plans. For example, in the early stages of discussing the list of LSC initiatives, one teacher impatiently asked if the teachers had to accept them: "So is this thing [list of initiatives] a done deed? What are we doing here?" When she learned that the teachers' decisions directly affected the fates of the initiatives, she lobbied to keep certain ones out of the SIP because she did not think teachers should be held responsible for implementing them. Thus, the extensive participation of the entire faculty in SIP revision fostered a sense of greater accountability for the improvement plans they made.

The faculty's planning was almost exclusively pragmatic. Teachers pared away some of the symbolic initiatives in the 1991-92 SIP, and they kept, deleted, or incrementally changed the pragmatic ones. The fact that the LSC had devised symbolic initiatives relying on teacher-implementors antagonized the faculty at first, but they quickly rose above that initial resentment to deal with the issues the LSC had addressed. Teachers accepted the two LSC proposals dealing with parents, the one that called for inservices for the paraprofessionals so that they could help teachers more with classroom instruction, and four others that built incrementally on what Rivera teachers already do or had planned to do. The teachers' deliberations thus conferred pragmatic status on the subset of those proposals for teacher-implementors. With respect to the more substantial and controversial LSC initiatives, teachers either countered with compromise proposals or sent them into committees for further planning. Teachers were unwilling to accept the thematic sorts of changes recommended by the LSC without playing a part in their planning. In all, Rivera

teachers planned pragmatically; they pared away symbolic plans, slightly altered pragmatic plans, accepted incremental changes proposed by the LSC, and assigned the LSC's thematic initiatives to planning committees.

Securing teacher accountability for the SIP was a labor-intensive, time-consuming enterprise. Its cost was the exclusion of thematic initiatives, or major new programs, from the teachers' agenda. In a building-wide meeting near the end of the SIP revision process, one teacher leader realized this. Amid the recitation of the incremental changes made in the grade-level groups, she interjected, with a tone of pure distress in her voice, that Rivera needed new programs that lead to improvement. She lamented, "If we leave things as they are now, then that's not good enough." No one disagreed with her statement. That was simply the price teachers at Rivera Elementary paid this year to bring an end to symbolic planning and to establish their accountability for implementing future thematic initiatives.

Accountability and Vision at Rivera

Accountability

A fairly thorough evaluation of the 1991-92 SIP provided information for SIP revision at Rivera Elementary this spring. Based on the results of that evaluation, the principal set a goal of establishing schoolwide accountability for SIP implementation. She relied on two strategies to build accountability: 1) involving the entire school community, including all teachers and administrators, in the planning process; and 2) dividing the planning labor so that the LSC set new directions for change, and the teachers then decided which of those directions could realistically be pursued in the next academic year. The first of the strategies helped develop teacher ownership in the revised plan and thus teacher accountability for its implementation. The second promoted teacher accountability for new initiatives, and it also led the LSC to examine the accountability of others. The second strategy, however, created a gap in communication about the SIP between the two decision-making bodies. The principal attempted to resolve the communication problems by organizing seven planning committees of both LSC and teacher members to settle the most controversial issues that the council's initiatives had brought to the floor. In this way she hoped to preserve teacher accountability for the SIP and still encourage planners to take significant steps towards school improvement.

When planners become accountable for the implementation of their plans, they shift from symbolic to pragmatic planning (see Figure 1 on p. 10). This spring, Rivera teachers underwent that change. They tried to make the new version of the SIP more "user friendly" by deleting earlier symbolic initiatives, adjusting some of the pragmatic plans which they were already carrying out, and formulating initiatives that modify their present duties incrementally. They applied their new planning approach to the LSC's symbolic initiatives as well. These planning tasks left teachers no time to work on thematic initiatives this

spring, but they are now well prepared to undertake that type of pragmatic planning in the future.

Vision

A vision provides a common direction for change, based on earlier improvement efforts at the school (see discussion on pp. 9-12). Although Rivera Elementary presently lacks a vision as defined here, some of the improvements in progress at the school have the potential to shape one over time. In particular, two thematic changes implemented this year are likely to contribute to vision building at Rivera: the formation of teachers' grade-level groups, and a cooperative learning program.

The grade-level groups coordinated teacher planning and facilitated their decision making this year. They empowered the faculty. Thus, the grade-level groups have already influenced the course of school improvement, and they assure the teachers of a role in developing a school vision.

That vision might be to become a cooperative school, one in which "...cooperative activities take place at the school level as well as at the classroom level" (Slavin, 1990, p. 278). Cooperative learning is a method of teaching that encourages students to work together in pairs or small groups. This spring, twenty to twenty-five teachers from the main building and the branch attended the inservice sessions at Rivera on cooperative learning. After the last inservice, some teachers continued to meet in a cooperative-learning support group. Support-group members shared their classroom experiences, and worked together to plan more cooperative lessons. In 1992-93, the support group will organize peer-coaching activities (pairs of teachers training each other to give better cooperative learning lessons) to facilitate both cooperative learning in the classroom and cooperation among support-group teachers. Teacher leaders hope that most of the faculty will eventually participate in the staff development, support groups, and peer-coaching activities, extending cooperation throughout the entire school. If the program continues as planned, the model of the cooperative school may provide a base for Rivera Elementary's first school vision.

Vision and Improvement Planning at Winkle Elementary

Winkle Elementary is a neighborhood school housed in a fairly new building. Roughly half of the children are Hispanic, and the other half are African American; most are from low-income families. The approximately 500 students at Winkle attend classes from prekindergarten through eighth grade.

This case study examines improvement planning for the Winkle junior high. The four seventh- and eighth-grade homerooms are organized into a small, departmentalized junior high school. Using the "schools-within-a-school" concept to achieve some of the benefits of smaller schools, the principal has arranged that most of the junior-high classes be held on the top floor of the building, physically separated from the younger children's classes. The classroom and resource teachers for the junior high collaborate with the principal in weekly meetings to develop and refine plans and policies that directly affect their own students. In these ways, the junior high functions as a relatively distinct and autonomous unit within Winkle Elementary School.

The Winkle school community differs from many others in Chicago because it has a school **vision**. The definition of vision introduced by Louis and Miles (1990) is that of a shared dream or image of what the school can become, based on actions already taken (see pp. 9-12). A vision arises from a school's planned and implemented activities and projects. Success breeds success, and planners tend to favor new changes that build on earlier, proven programs. Eventually, as such plans are made and carried out, a limited number of **directions or themes for improvement**[8] emerge at the school; planners design initiatives along those directions or themes that have been effective or that show promise (directed planning). A school vision, then, is not a monolithic picture; rather it weaves together the separate improvement themes generated by the school's good planning and successful implementation to form a unified tapestry depicting a shared conceptualization of the school's potential future.

The vision that unifies school improvement efforts at Winkle Elementary is to rebuild the partnership among school constituencies -- parents, staff, and students -- in order to increase student learning. Not surprisingly, this vision highlights and combines three of the school's tried-and-true improvement themes -- student, staff, and parent development. The three sections of the school improvement plan reflect these three themes. In the staff-development section of the SIP, plans include the setting aside of funds for numerous educational opportunities for staff, and the active encouragement of new teacher roles and practices, such as grant writing and the use of alternative forms of assessments. The

[8] Our use of the terms "thematic planning" and "improvement theme" is somewhat broader than the meaning in Louis and Miles (1990). Those authors describe a theme as "...more general than specific program activities..." (p. 206). At Winkle Elementary, their distinction between a major program and an improvement theme seemed accurate. At the other two schools, however, we found that many major programs launched completely new themes or directions for change (hence, thematic plans).

student-development section consists of initiatives about the planning and implementing of innovative instructional programs in many subject areas. During SIP revision this spring, planners expanded this section to incorporate policies designed to promote student commitment to learning as well (see next section). Plans in the parent-development section call for classes and workshops so that parents can improve their own educational backgrounds and better understand how to reinforce learning at home. Planners have also incorporated initiatives to provide parents with opportunities to tutor or volunteer in classrooms. To date, planners at Winkle -- and their plans -- have generally focused on each constituency separately. The principal, then, has constructed the partnership vision as a broader framework for school improvement that coordinates and goes beyond the present three themes for change.

In order to have an effect on improvement planning, the vision must be generally shared throughout the school community. The principal takes an active "but not dominating" role in developing and spreading the vision (Lewis and Miles, 1990, p. 230). Usually teachers and parents buy into a vision because they have contributed to the improvement themes underlying it. For years, members of the Winkle school community have worked on parent, student, and staff development to increase student learning. Parents, for example, accompany their children on school-sponsored field trips to bookstores, where they help their children select books for the school library. They also take part in the evaluation of their children through a newly designed report card. Teachers have attended extensive and on-going staff development in order to introduce the following instructional changes: whole-language programs; Socratic seminars; hands-on math and science; and computer-based writing projects. Teacher and parent involvement with the three improvement themes has laid the foundation for the Winkle vision and its acceptance.

School vision influences improvement planning; it gives rise to **directed planning**.[9] Directed planning refers to the planning of a new program or of a major policy change that is integrated into the larger plan for improvement because it builds on one or more of the previously established improvement themes. In the next section, the discussion of a directed initiative added to the Winkle improvement plan during SIP revision this year serves as an illustration of how school vision affects improvement planning.

SIP Revision and the Graduation Initiative

During SIP revision at Winkle Elementary this spring, planners presented more initiatives to improve the school. The new programs and policy changes built on past implementation efforts, and they contributed to one of the three improvement themes -- student, staff, or parent development. The most controversial revision was the new graduation initiative which established minimum performance standards for eighth graders, backed by the threat of retention. After some discussion -- particularly of this initiative --

[9] For a more extensive examination of planning types and of the planning model based on school vision, see Figure 2 and the discussion on pp. 9-12.

the LSC supported the efforts of school planners to steer Winkle closer to its vision by approving the revised SIP at their meeting in mid-March.

In its final version, the graduation initiative consisted of both a policy setting new graduation standards, and a rationale for that policy. The new performance standards for eighth-grade graduation at Winkle are: minimum scores of 7.5 grade-level equivalents in both math and reading on the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills*;[10] sufficient credits for junior-high classes passed with a grade of "C" or above; and passing grades on both the U.S. and Illinois Constitution examinations. In the rationale, planners argue that "(S)tudents must know that they are responsible for what they produce in school. They will be held to these minimum standards" (p. 15). Planners expect the graduation initiative to increase student commitment to learning and achievement, and so build on the student-development improvement theme. It is, therefore, an example of directed planning.

The Principal's Part

The principal presented the junior-high teachers with a multitude of directed plans this spring, and some of them became the Winkle graduation initiative. She noted that several years ago, one of the junior-high teachers had started talking with her about the need to make students more responsible for their own learning. Over the years their dialogue had continued, often emphasizing the possible benefits and disadvantages of retention. Drawing on these discussions, the principal proposed a new set of graduation standards for eighth graders, and numerous changes in curriculum and assessment procedures designed to help students meet those standards. She worked closely with the junior-high teachers to develop the SIP initiative, and to obtain their commitment to it.

Since every vision is an amalgam of the effective and promising directions of change being pursued at a school, the principal can choose to focus school planning on one improvement theme rather than on another. "*Focus* involves helping faculty members and others to sift through the variety of activities in the school, drawing explicit attention to those that matter and those that are most consistent with the emerging vision" (Louis and Miles, 1990, p. 231). At Winkle Elementary, the principal has twice selected a planning focus. In the original and first revised Winkle SIPs, she focused on the staff-development theme. She designated Wednesday to be "inservice day," and throughout the two academic years, consultants were hired to offer teachers extensive staff-development programs at the school building after school. Although not wanting to diminish staff-development opportunities next year, the principal began to change the planning focus to student development in the 1992 SIP revision:

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[10] In devising the graduation initiative, Winkle planners used materials indicating that the Board of Education's eighth-grade graduation requirements included these minimum *ITBS* scores. After LSC approval of the SIP, they discovered that this Board requirement had been dropped. Consequently, *ITBS* scores will not be a criterion for graduation at Winkle Elementary.

> During the past four years, Winkle staff has made a commitment to upgrade teaching skills, implement a variety of new and effective teaching techniques, and incorporate the use of state-of-the-art technology and instructional materials into daily lessons. Now we move to the next phase which shifts the focus to the learner [cited from the rationale for the graduation initiative in the SIP, p. 15].

Thus, the principal's directed planning significantly influenced SIP revision at Winkle Elementary this spring. Through the graduation initiative, she refocused improvement planning efforts onto the student-development theme, specifically onto promoting student commitment to learn and achieve.

The Teachers' Part

One of the main planning goals the junior-high teachers share is to maintain their accountability for plan implementation. Teacher involvement in the process of planning fosters a sense of ownership in the improvement plans, and so establishes -- and can maintain -- accountability for plan implementation. At Winkle, groups of teachers meet weekly in "team meetings" to exchange news and ideas, to resolve issues, and to plan. "Teams" consist of the classroom and resource faculty for two or three grades and the principal. A team meeting functions as a platform for addressing the numerous incremental planning tasks of teachers and for debating about directed initiatives that affect team members and their students. At these meetings, the principal learns about teachers' views and recommendations, and about their reactions to her own directed planning proposals. Team members work together as planners and decision makers; thus, the process of planning through team meetings reaffirms teacher accountability for plan implementation.

The junior-high team shares the Winkle vision of rebuilding the partnership among school constituencies. Their ideas and efforts have contributed to at least two of the school improvement themes -- staff and student development. In accord with the initial planning focus on the staff-development improvement theme, team teachers helped plan, and then participated in, the major staff-development programs offered at Winkle over the last two years. They have also discussed many student-development activities and projects with the principal. In fact, the on-going dialogue between one team teacher and the principal culminated in her proposal of the directed graduation initiative. The junior-high team works to plan and implement programs to carry the three improvement themes and the school vision into the classroom.

The junior-high team debated about the graduation proposal and other directed plans, and made the final decision to accept the initiative. The principal introduced her ideas about graduation standards and retention to the junior-high teachers at a team meeting in late February. Discussion on the issues really began the next day at a half-day inservice for the team. The principal winningly outlined her complete proposal, which called for setting graduation standards and redesigning the curriculum and assessment procedures so that teachers would help students become responsible for meeting the new standards.

The teachers expressed their doubts about every aspect of the principal's proposal, but they agreed that – at least in theory – Winkle students needed to develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning. During the inservice and the ensuing team meetings about the graduation initiative, teachers spent much more of the meetings deliberating about the new curriculum and alternative forms of assessment, which they found fairly problematic, than about school policies. The junior-high teachers seemed to have fewer objections to the proposed changes in school policy than to some of the extensive modifications of their classroom practices that those changes might entail.

As the time to make the final decision about the graduation initiative grew imminent, the team negotiations about the contents of the initiative resolved more and more issues. Both the junior-high teachers and the principal made concessions, and both sides recognized that some improvement planning would have to take place after SIP revision. Everyone wanted a team consensus in order to include the initiative in the SIP. At the last team meeting before the LSC vote on the revised plan, the principal told the teachers, "I want us doing this together. If you don't want to do it, you have to tell me now. [Silence] So what do you want to do?" Two teachers responded that they would approve the initiative as long as it did not impose regulations on curriculum or assessment procedures about which the team had not yet decided. The others seemed to agree. Consequently, the final wording of the graduation initiative carefully avoided all but one of the suggested plans about curriculum and assessment. This process of give-and-take to reach a consensus about the specific contents of the graduation initiative illustrates the junior-high team's sense of accountability for implementing the plan.

Discussion Of Planning the Graduation Initiative

At a school with a vision, planners are usually accountable for plan implementation. As discussed earlier, vision and improvement themes are based on successfully implemented policy and program changes, which have been carried out by accountable planners. So a school with a vision must have some history of accountability for its improvement plans. Accountable planners at such schools, then, have an interest in maintaining their accountability for plan implementation.

The process of planning can itself build and maintain accountability for plan implementation. The team meetings this spring gave the junior-high faculty a forum for negotiating with the principal about the exact nature of a directed policy initiative with numerous consequences for what and how they teach. Through this forum, the teachers made certain that the initiative included only those provisions they could agree to implement. The principal noted that, because the teachers knew their input about the initiative was important, they took ownership in the idea; not only would they implement it, she added, but they will evaluate and refine the initiative over time. The process of planning a compromise initiative through the team meetings provided these teachers with the opportunity to maintain their accountability for plan implementation.

In addition to having a stable base of accountable planners who strive to maintain their accountability, a school with a vision is also characterized by directed planning. The interaction of planning and vision distinguishes directed planning from **thematic planning**, the planning of major new programs at schools without a vision. A planner relies on the vision to shape directed initiatives, which "fit" or "belong" in the improvement plan because they contribute to one or more improvement themes. For example, the Winkle vision influenced the development of the graduation initiative. Earlier versions of the SIP focused on broad plans for the faculty to do their part to rebuild the partnership through staff development. With an increasingly well trained staff, the principal decided that in 1992-93, continuing to rebuild the partnership would require changes in the area of student development -- particularly in encouraging student commitment to learning. The graduation initiative arose from this new planning focus. Therefore, the vision of rebuilding the partnership laid the groundwork for both the staff development programs and the new emphasis on student commitment plans like the graduation initiative. Directed planning depends on the school's vision.

In sum, the planning of the graduation initiative at Winkle Elementary illustrates a second stage of improvement planning (see Figure 2 on p. 11). In stage-two planning, the accountability of the planners is the norm. The primary innovation at stage two is directed planning. The school vision provides an integrated framework for the SIP, and so contributes to the development of the improvement themes by inspiring and organizing directed initiatives.

The improvement plan can serve as a base for subsequent planning. The Winkle junior-high team did not complete its planning for the next year with the acceptance of the graduation initiative; rather, the initiative was just the start of their planning efforts. Although they had not agreed about changing the curriculum and assessment procedures at that time, none of the team wanted to impose new graduation standards without modifying some practices to help students meet those standards. The next section includes a description and analysis of the planning that followed the junior-high team's decision to accept the graduation initiative.

Planning the New Junior-High Curriculum and Assessment Procedures

The Winkle junior-high team planned for the 1992-93 school year at the weekly team meetings -- and occasional extra meetings -- from the end of February through the end of June. The principal led the team meetings when she was present, but on several occasions she did not attend. The team tackled the graduation initiative in late February and early March but, as noted in the previous section, even then their discussions concentrated on curriculum and assessment issues. Team teachers dedicated many uncompensated hours, especially during the summer, to rethinking and planning what to teach, how to teach, and how to evaluate academic performance, in order to help their students meet the new graduation requirements on time.

Even though they worked as a team, the principal and the teachers did not plan alike during the meetings. The two distinct patterns of planning arose because the principal and the teachers had different planning jobs. The principal introduced the new planning focus on the student-development improvement theme through directed planning; the teachers, then, planned incrementally to translate the directed initiatives into plans for their classrooms. Changing the focus of improvement planning at Winkle depended on the planning efforts of both parts of the team.

The Principal's Planning

The first step in the principal's approach to improvement planning was directed planning. Her broad new proposals included everything from modifying school retention policy to rethinking the value of grades. After making those suggestions, the principal used her style, skills, and expertise to convince teachers to endorse some of them. As a second step, then, she fought for a consensus among team members about which of the proposed innovations to adopt. Although team acceptance of the graduation initiative was the turning point of this second planning step, after that the principal continued to work on consensus building for proposals still in dispute. Third, whenever the team accepted one of the directed changes, the principal led them in working out the details of its implementation through incremental planning. The principal set the agenda of the team meetings according to these steps in her improvement planning.

The principal began the process of improvement planning with directed plans. From earlier discussions with team teachers, she decided that a major barrier to the school vision of rebuilding the partnership was too little student dedication to learning: students were not carrying out their part of the partnership. "Unless the students get involved in their own education," she commented, "we'll be spinning our wheels." Consequently, she introduced the following initiatives designed to promote greater student responsibility for learning: minimum graduation standards and retention; an ungraded two- or three-year upper-grades program to replace seventh- and eighth-grade classes; an extended school year to allow for thirteen-week trimesters, each followed by a week of evaluation of student work; review panels of at least three persons to assess student work after a trimester; a project-oriented curriculum for individuals and groups of students in math, science, and social studies; weekly student trips to bookstores or to the main branch of the public library for research on project topics; portfolio evaluations; a credit system for projects completed; teachers acting as coaches rather than doing the students' work for them; and minimum standards for reading. Most of the principal's proposals consisted of suggestions for radical, directed changes.

The principal wanted her long list of directed plans to serve two purposes: to encourage students to participate in rebuilding their share of the partnership, and to push teachers to consider adapting their practices. Following a basic rule of educational change, she assumed "...that people need pressure to change (even in directions which they desire)..." (Fullan, 1982, p.91). Whereas the junior-high teachers always want to improve their

curricular and instructional practices, they had not been particularly ready to plan innovations again this spring. So the principal's pattern of planning began with numerous directed initiatives not only to bring about greater student commitment to learning, but also to obligate teachers to think seriously about making more changes.

The second step in the principal's planning strategy was to obtain a team consensus about implementing some of her directed initiatives. She first showed teachers the importance with which she regarded her suggested plans. At team meetings, she spoke passionately about the students' need to become accountable for their own academic performance. She freed the entire team from their classes for a half day in order for them to visit the main branch of the public library, hoping that the trip would convince them that students really could do research there once a week. She worked for hours after school with two of the team teachers to discuss and develop math projects. As Louis and Miles note, "If the principal is insufficiently invested in the innovation effort to devote substantial amounts of energy to it, the rest of the staff receives a not-so-subtle hint about priorities" (1990, p. 231). In this case, the principal left no doubt about her priorities; the junior-high faculty knew the principal was ready to make sacrifices and work hard to help them implement the proposed initiatives.

Once the junior-high team understood the intensity of the principal's interest in the proposed plans, the principal began to negotiate with them to move towards consensus. She conceded the ungraded two- or three-year program, the suggestion of credit only for projects completed (instead of for courses completed), and the extended school year, in order to secure team support for both the graduation initiative and a project-oriented curriculum in math, science, and social studies. These compromises represented the turning point in team acceptance of the directed initiatives. The negotiations continued. By the end of March, the team had reached a consensus to adopt (albeit with modifications) several of the principal's radical proposals, and to ignore the rest.

The final step in the principal's pattern of improvement planning was to help team members work out the details of the new initiatives through incremental planning. From the end of March to the end of June, the principal led team modification and refinement of the directed plans they had accepted. They carried out planning jobs such as report-card revision, project development, and scheduling. The lengthiest incremental planning task undertaken at the team meetings was the modification of the credit-system initiative. Originally the principal had conceived of awarding students credit for completed projects. From the start of the negotiations, though, the team gradually began to revise her plan so that students would receive one credit per completed junior-high course. One of the teachers insisted that the number of credits received be a function of the student's grade rather than just a matter of coursework completed, but the principal still wanted credit assigned independently of grades. The team dealt with the issue sporadically until June. At two of their last meetings, they considered different possibilities. Finally they selected a system that incorporates grades into the reckoning of credits, and that sets a minimum number of credits to be earned in each of the five major subjects during each year of junior high. They then agreed that students who are short of credits at the end of the seventh-

grade year should probably attend summer school and, as stated in the SIP, those short at the end of the eighth-grade year will be retained. In this way, the principal relied on incremental planning as a way to flesh out the directed initiatives that the junior-high team had adopted.

This spring the Winkle principal refocused planning efforts on the student-development improvement theme. She accomplished this through her three-step approach to improvement planning at the junior-high team meetings. First she suggested many directed initiatives to the team, then she guided consensus building about which ones to accept, and finally she helped the team take ownership of the initiatives through incremental planning tasks that shaped them to the preferences of team members. With this strategy, the principal led the junior-high team into planning for the development of student commitment to learning.

The Teachers' Planning

During SIP revision and the meetings that followed, the teachers on the junior-high team had their own planning job. They did no directed planning this spring. Rather, they made decisions about the principal's directed proposals and modified them through incremental planning. Incremental planning allowed teachers to translate between the team's new directed policies and their own classrooms. The process of incremental planning established teacher ownership of the modified initiatives and solidified the new focus on increasing student commitment to learning.

The junior-high team negotiated decisions and compromises on the directed plans. The teachers quickly voiced their opposition to some of the principal's proposals, such as the two- or three-year ungraded program, and their interest in others. The principal acquiesced to the teachers' vetoes. The team continued to redesign initiatives concerning the project-oriented curriculum and the credit system until both teachers and the principal were satisfied with the changes. In the end, team teachers made the decisions about the graduation and other initiatives, and they usually decided to work with the principal on the proposals. Team teachers liked the basic idea of getting Winkle students to become responsible for their own education. Having made its decisions, the junior-high team then began to convert the directed initiatives into plans for implementation through incremental planning.

The principal led the incremental planning on assessment and scheduling during the planning meetings, but team teachers were usually the most vocal participants and made the final decisions about how to carry out the initiatives. For example, the principal guided report-card revision, but the teachers debated on, and eventually selected, most of the measures and items included. As teacher participation in decision making and planning grew, so did their ownership in the directed plans and in the new student focus for improvement planning.

Through incremental planning, the team gave substance to its directed plans. For example, the graduation initiative included a vaguely described credit system which the team later defined clearly, in conjunction with a set of consequences for students earning too few credits (see section on the principal's planning). On several issues, the team relied on incremental planning as a way to mediate between the directed initiatives and the current practices of the teachers. One such issue was the principal's proposal of a project-oriented curriculum -- meaning a "project-only" or a "project-dominated" curriculum -- in math, science, and social studies. The team adopted a compromise project initiative in which non-project work would also be a small part of the coursework. As the team actually planned the projects, though, their pivotal significance in the curricula continued to decline. Teacher knowledge about what would work in their classrooms took priority over the spirit of the directed initiative. Both the team and its individual members kept recasting the projects so that they more closely resembled those that the teachers had confidence in as "good, workable projects." Incremental planning thus functioned as a bridge that allowed the team and its members to construct specific plans for implementing the directed plans in the school and in the classroom.

At times when they are content with their progress, accountable planners tend to plan incrementally. Accountable planners feel responsible for plan failures as well as successes, and so they often favor small, low-risk (incremental) changes. The junior-high team has implemented many improvement plans in the past; in fact, they had just adopted double periods for the major subjects earlier in the school year. This spring, the teachers were fairly well satisfied with the changes they had made, and were hesitant to assume the risks of directed planning again so soon. In fact, one teacher commented that this team had implemented so many changes that he was unsure if he could handle any more. Not unexpectedly, the junior-high teachers' planning suggestions for the 1992-93 school year tended to be incremental initiatives such as keeping students after school for misbehavior during class, and regarding both "D" and "F" as failing grades. When asked about their long-range hopes for the school at a half-day inservice, the teachers included both incremental and directed proposals (extending the junior high through ninth grade, holding academic extended-day classes, and designing a program to help students with moral issues, values, and decision making) on their wish lists, indicating that they do submit directed initiatives to the team at other times. Yet because the junior-high teachers were accountable and relatively content with their progress this spring, they responded to the conservative influences that result in incremental, not directed, plans.

Educational change is a process (Fullan, 1982); in this case, the change consisted of developing a school graduation policy and modifying curricular and assessment practices to encourage junior-high students to become responsible for their own learning and achievement. The junior-high team undertook the process of change through negotiations, decision making, and planning. The principal presented the directed initiatives to the team, worked to obtain a consensus on some of them, and then led the team in incremental planning to implement the initiatives. The teachers considered the principal's directed proposals, decided which ones to adopt, and then followed them up with the incremental planning needed for implementation. The principal and the teachers demonstrated different

patterns of improvement planning because they performed different jobs with respect to the new planning focus. The principal began the change process with directed planning, and the teachers extended it into the classroom through incremental planning.

Accountability and Directed Planning at Winkle

Winkle Elementary is a school at the second stage of planning on the model developed in this report (see Figure 2 on p. 11). As a rule, planners at stage-two schools are accountable for the implementation of their improvement plans, making symbolic planning at these schools extremely unlikely. In fact, a school with a vision must have a history of accountability among its planners. The planning activities of the Winkle junior-high team illustrate that the process of planning can itself establish and reinforce planner accountability. The team decided to adopt and to modify initiatives that moved forward with the principal's directed planning agenda and still maintained the teachers' accountability for implementation.

Accountable planners often follow a conservative trend to plan incrementally. The teacher members of the Winkle junior-high team planned incrementally this spring. They did so, in part, because much of their contribution to the improvement effort centered on transforming the principal's directed initiatives into instructional plans -- an incremental process. In addition, they had already implemented several initiatives this year, and they were well satisfied with the changes they had made. Accountable planners feel responsible for both the successes and failures of their plans, a situation that discourages frequent risk taking. Directed plans entail larger risks of failure. Incremental planning is low-risk planning; hence it appeals to accountable planners who are content with their current situation.

Schools at the second stage of improvement planning have a vision. The vision combines the various improvement themes generated by the school's good planning and successful implementation into a unified picture of the school's future. Therefore, a school's vision is a product of its effective improvement planning.

In turn, the vision has an effect on the school's improvement plans. Planners can prioritize the school's goals and organize the initiatives in terms of the vision. Vision provides a framework for directed planning because major innovations build on past successes; directed initiatives thus complement other plans, and elaborate on one or more of the school's improvement themes.

A school vision does not have a uniform effect on all planners, nor is its influence constant at all times. Improvement planning goes on regularly at Winkle, and most of that planning is incremental. The principal proposed numerous directed changes this spring to refocus planning on the student-development improvement theme, but she actually spent more time doing incremental planning with the team. Whereas team teachers did not propose directed initiatives this spring, they included suggestions for new directed plans on

their wish lists at the half-day inservice. At Winkle, the principal usually takes the lead in planning that builds towards the school vision, but at times other planners may also propose directed plans.

Clearly both directed and incremental plans are part of the educational change process. Without the committed planning efforts of both the principal and the team teachers, the graduation initiative and the change to a project-oriented curriculum with diverse means of student assessment would not have been implemented at Winkle Elementary this fall.

III. SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

The information and suggestions in this chapter are based on three sources: 1) our direct observations of teachers and others working together to revise their school improvement plans (SIPs); 2) interviews from teachers, principals, and LSC members about SIPS; and 3) analysis of LSC meetings observed during the year. These same suggestions are reprinted in a separate publication, *Suggestions for School Improvement Planning*, also available from the Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.

1. Prepare to Plan

- Start planning early

Because the SIP takes many hours to evaluate and revise adequately, schools should begin the process several months before it is due.

- Find a convenient time and place for meetings
- Schedule uninterrupted time for planning (meet at times when students are not in the school building)
- Take into account the schedule of teachers, the LSC, and the principal when setting aside time to plan

According to one teacher, "every school day is a crisis" and it is difficult to give undivided attention to planning during a regular school day. Many schools have scheduled at least some of their planning time when they won't be interrupted and when they have plenty of energy. Here are some ways that schools have made time for planning.

One school held its meetings on Saturday mornings when the school was open as a social center. Teachers, LSC members and parents met on several Saturdays for three hours at a time, which they could not have done during the school day.

Other schools used inservice days for SIP revision. This allowed planning to be done in a relaxed atmosphere without the interruptions so common on regular school days. Like the Saturday meetings, the inservice days also provided a solid block of time devoted solely to the SIP.

One school applied for a small grant to conduct a one-day retreat to explore the schools-within-a-school concept. The LSC and staff at another school have taken weekend retreats to gather ideas and build consensus about the SIP.

- Develop a planning time line that has intermediate deadlines

Set intermediate deadlines to ensure that planning is completed as scheduled. This is especially important when several committees are working on different SIP sections. Planners must allow time to circulate drafts for comments and revisions before submitting the final version.

Because one legal responsibility of the local school council is to approve the school improvement plan, it is important that members are fully aware of its contents and participate in the various stages of SIP development. Ideally LSC members should participate on planning committees. At the very least, the council should request that planners report on SIP progress in a timely manner. The LSC should avoid requesting significant changes on the mandated approval date.

One LSC recommended several significant changes on the day the plan was to be approved. Teachers had worked hard and had invited council members to attend planning sessions, but only one did so. Because LSC members waited until the last minute to voice their objections and suggestions, the principal and a group of teachers had to work many extra hours rewriting the plan. Due to budget constraints, teachers were forced to give up some of their planned initiatives in order to accommodate those supported by the LSC. This created a tense situation for all involved. To prevent a re-occurrence, the LSC agreed not to make last minute changes in the future.

Few councils demanded significant changes. Unfortunately, it is common for councils to approve the plan without thoroughly reviewing it. Some local school councils saw the SIP for the first time on the night they were scheduled to approve it. Because most plans are long, council members could only take a cursory look before approving it. If councils do not review improvement plans, they are unlikely to ask important questions and, as a result, will have little impact on the plan. Consequently, councils members should actually participate in the process.

2. Monitor Current Programs

- Monitor implementation of the SIP
- Evaluate effectiveness of new programs

Throughout the year, designated individuals should monitor the current SIP. Are new programs, policies and initiatives being implemented? If not, why not? Are problems arising?

One school that we studied created a brief survey for teachers and other staff members that asked them how much of the SIP they were implementing. When the principal learned that numerous initiatives were not being fully carried out, she got teachers involved in a process to make subsequent plans more successful.

After determining the extent to which plans are being carried out, the next step is to discover whether the programs or activities are successful or not. The best way to begin the evaluation process is to encourage discussion. Do teachers believe that the program is reaching its goals? What promotes success? What hinders it? Do parents or students believe that the program is succeeding?

Instead of (or at least prior to) analyzing test score data, concentrate on other outcomes. Are students reading more books, completing more assignments, participating in more discussions, or writing better essays? If not, why not? Should the program be revised? Changes in test scores are likely to lag behind other indicators of better student performance.

Caution:	*The CPS has used a different form of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills every year since 1989. The grade-equivalent scores are not comparable from one year to another.*

3. Create Pragmatic Plans and Develop Accountability

- Create plans for which planners are accountable

Our research shows that the persons who are expected to carry out programs, activities or policies must agree to accept these new responsibilities. This is what we mean by **accountability**. From our observations we have found that the best way to develop accountability is for implementors to plan their own activities.

> Implementors should be planners
>
> Planners should be implementors

- Encourage input from everyone in the school community

In order to ensure that the SIP covers a broad range of activities, many people must be involved. One way to facilitate greater teacher input is to provide regular opportunities for teachers to collaborate. At least two principals arranged for teachers at each grade level to share a preparation period once a week. Teachers planned jointly and became familiar with alternative strategies and approaches. According to these principals, the weekly

planning meetings have prepared teachers to bring their ideas and concerns to the annual planning process.

A few schools "mandated" teacher involvement by requiring every teacher to participate in planning. At one school all staff members were expected to sign up for at least one SIP subcommittee and at another school teachers were divided into teams and assigned parts of the SIP for revisions.

One goal of teacher involvement is to increase ownership for innovations. Our research has shown that most teacher suggestions for the SIPs are readily accepted by both the principal and the local school council. This may be why some PPAC chairpersons believe teachers have become more active in planning over the past three years. One chairperson commented that during the first two years of reform, staff often complained about the SIP. The complaining has diminished now that teachers know their ideas can and often do become school policy. This chairperson said that if teachers don't contribute to improvement planning, they have little right to complain.

Parents and others in the school community should also participate in the SIP process. Many schools make a concerted effort to get others involved, but usually few parents respond. One principal worked hard to encourage contributions from reluctant parents. To ease their shyness and encourage participation, she often reinforced their suggestions. She held a brainstorming session at which everyone had to give ideas. The group then considered every suggestion. This proved to be an effective strategy to increase parent input.

Broad participation in improvement planning, with true discussion and debate, enhances collaboration and fosters commitment. A memo passed around to solicit suggestions will not achieve these results.

- Organize ways to discuss improvement plan initiatives among groups in the school community

- Improve LSC and PPAC communications

What happens if two groups are working on the same part of the plan separately? Chances are they devise separate proposals; this happened in one school. Most LSCs and PPACs rarely meet as a group and often are unaware of the other's planning activities. It is better to for planning groups to collaborate and communicate often about plan revision. When each group comes up with its own plans independently, it could lead to a disjointed school improvement plan and to serious conflicts when the LSC meets to approve the plan.

Coordinating participatory efforts during SIP planning is necessary. When the tasks of developing and writing the SIP are delegated to various committees, one person (or team) must be responsible for overseeing the process. This leader, whether an administrator

or teacher, must ensure that an open line of communication exists among groups and that the divergent parts of the SIP form a cohesive document.

- Don't plan what others have to do
- Build on successful implementation efforts

The surest way for improvement efforts to fail is to exclude implementors from the planning process. The initiatives least likely to be implemented have been written by someone other than those responsible for carrying them out. This is especially true when a small group or the principal revises the entire plan without requesting input or feedback on a draft of the plan.

Schools should build on initiatives that have been successfully implemented. This could mean increasing the number of students in a program, expanding material resources, increasing staff training, or integrating themes in existing programs. The Junior Great Books program at one school, for example, was expanded to include all middle- and upper-grade students. It originally had been for gifted students only.

- Make a draft of the plan readily available
- Involve all teachers in SIP discussions

The easiest way for a principal to know that the staff is familiar with the school improvement plan is to hold a meeting to review and discuss the plan. Some teachers want to understand how initiatives are linked to one another. Teachers in several schools met in small groups by grade level or by department to discuss on initiatives specific to their groups.

- Build in a time line for different stages of implementation

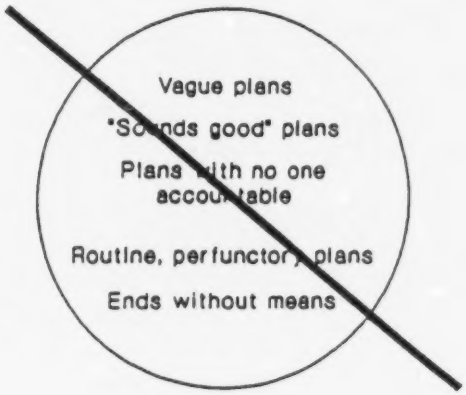
One SIP lists all initiatives chronologically by date of implementation on two pages, so implementors and planners know exactly what they should be doing throughout the school year. The intermediate deadlines help keep implementors on schedule. The principal and teachers also use this guide when reporting SIP updates to the local school council.

4. Avoid Symbolic Plans

- Toss out symbolic initiatives

Examples of symbolic initiatives from first and second year school improvement plans include: "pass out basal readers during the 2nd week of school," "monitor instruction and pupil progress," and "utilize all pragmatic strategies and techniques necessary for the realization of [reading] goal." Although it may be tempting to use symbolic initiatives

because they are easy to write and "look good" on paper, they do not translate into school improvement.



Some ideas may look good on paper, but will never be successfully implemented. Take them out of your school improvement plan! It does not help to plan activities that cannot happen.

5. Vision

Vision, as we use it in this report, has a more specific meaning than just wishful thinking about a school. **A vision is a <u>shared</u> dream or image of what the school can realistically become, based on actions already taken.** New improvement plans build on earlier, effective programs. Over time, as plans are made and carried out, successful school improvement proceeds in a limited number of directions. Eventually a school planner -- usually the principal -- develops a vision for the school that weaves together those directions for change to form a unified picture depicting the school's potential future.

Developing a school vision takes time. Although we can make no specific recommendations, good planning that builds on a school's successfully implemented programs is the key.

Not all school communities are ready to develop a vision. Some confuse school vision with wishful thinking. When planners do wishful thinking, they tend to devise symbolic plans. They think of all the programs and changes they would like to see in the school, and too often forget to consider who would carry out the work of implementation. School communities that have not successfully planned and implemented improvements should focus on resolving such problems first.

6. Plan How to Evaluate your SIP

- Think about how to evaluate your SIP while you are writing it
- Develop ongoing evaluation procedures
- Form an SIP monitoring committee

Don't wait until you have finished the plan to think about evaluation. If evaluation strategies are built into the plan, you will have a much better idea about how new ideas and new programs are succeeding. You don't necessarily need an elaborate "scientific" evaluation scheme. What is needed is information from many sources about the strengths and weaknesses of new (and established) activities and programs.

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